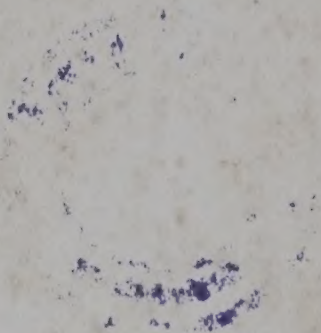


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J. R. Sell.

Central College  
Bangalore

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ATALANTA IN CALYDON  
AND  
ERECHTHEUS



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# ATALANTA IN CALYDON AND ERECHTHEUS

By  
Algernon Charles Swinburne



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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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ATALANTA IN CALYDON

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# ATALANTA IN CALYDON

A TRAGEDY

Τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ δρᾶν • κατθανὼν δὲ πᾶς ἀνὴρ  
Γῇ καὶ σκιά • τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν ῥέπει

EUR. *Fr. Mel.* 20 (537)





TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

I NOW DEDICATE, WITH EQUAL AFFECTION, REVERENCE, AND REGRET, A  
POEM INSCRIBED TO HIM WHILE YET ALIVE IN WORDS WHICH ARE NOW  
RETAINED BECAUSE THEY WERE LAID BEFORE HIM ; AND TO WHICH, RATHER  
THAN CANCEL THEM, I HAVE ADDED SUCH OTHERS AS WERE EVOKED BY  
THE NEWS OF HIS DEATH : THAT THOUGH LOSING THE PLEASURE I MAY  
NOT LOSE THE HONOUR OF INSCRIBING IN FRONT OF MY WORK THE HIGHEST  
OF CONTEMPORARY NAMES.



ᾧ χεο δὴ Βορέηθεν ἀπότροπος' ἀλλὰ σε Νύμφαι  
ἤγαγον Ἀσπασίαν ἠδύπνοοι καθ' ἅλα,  
πληροῦσαι μέλιτος θεόθεν στόμα, μή τι Ποσειδῶν  
βλάβῃ, ἐν ᾧ σὺν ἔχων σὴν μελίγηρυν ὕπα.  
τοῖος ἀοιδὸς ἔφυς· ἡμεῖς δ' ἔτι κλαίμεν, οἳ σου  
δευόμεθ' οἰχομένου, καί σε ποθοῦμεν αἰεί.  
εἶπε δὲ Πιερίδων τις ἀναστρεφθεῖσα πρὸς ἄλλην·  
ἦλθεν, ἰδοῦ, πάντων φίλτατος ἦλθε βροτῶν,  
στεμματα δρεψάμενος νεοθηλέα χερσὶ γεραιαῖς,  
καὶ πολὺν δάφναις ἀμφεκάλυψε κάρα,  
ἠδὺ τι Σικελικαῖς ἐπὶ πηκτίσιν, ἠδὺ τι χόρδαις,  
ἄσόμενος· πολλὴν γὰρ μετέβαλλε λύραν,  
πολλάκι δ' ἐν βήσσαισι καθήμενον εὖρεν Ἀπόλλων,  
ἄνθεσι δ' ἔστεψεν, τερπνὰ δ' ἔδωκε λέγειν,  
Πᾶνα τ' αἰμίνηστόν τε Πίτυν Κόρυθόν τε δύσεδρον,  
ἣν τ' ἐφίλησε θεὰν θνητὸς Ἀμαδρύαδα·  
πόντου δ' ἐν μεγάροισιν ἐκοίμισε Κυμοδάμειαν,  
τὴν τ' Ἀγαμεμνονίαν παῖδ' ἀπέδωκε πατρὶ,  
πρὸς δ' ἑοῦς Δελφοὺς θεόπληκτον ἔπεμψεν Ὀρέστην  
τειρόμενον στυγεραῖς ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα θεαῖς.





ῥ' ἔχεο δὴ καὶ ἄνευθε φίλων καὶ ἄνευθεν αἰοιδῆς,  
δρεψόμενος μαλακῆς ἄνθεα Περσεφόνης.  
ῥ' ἔχεο· κοῦκ ἔτ' ἔσει, κοῦκ αὖ ποτέ σοι παρεδοῦμαι  
ἄζόμενος, χειρῶν χερσὶ θιγὼν ὁσίοις·  
νῦν δ' αὖ μνησάμενον γλυκύπικρος ὑπήλυθεν αἰδῶς,  
οἷα τυχῶν οἴου πρὸς σέθεν οἶος ἔχω·  
οὔποτε σοῖς, γέρον, ὕμμα φίλοις φίλον ὕμμασι τέρψω  
σῆς, γέρον, ἀψάμενος, φίλτατε, δεξιτερᾶς.  
ἦ ψαφαρὰ κόνις, ἦ ψαφαρὸς βίος ἔπτι· τί τούτων  
μεῖον ἐφημερίων ; οὐ κόνις ἀλλὰ βίος.  
ἀλλὰ μοι ἡδύτερός γε πέλεις πολὺ τῶν ἔτ' ἐόντων,  
ἔπλεο γάρ· σοὶ μὴν ταῦτα θανόντι φέρω,  
παῦρα μὲν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κῆρος ἐτήτυμα· μηδ' ἀποτρεφθῆς,  
πρὸς δὲ βαλὼν ἔτι νῦν ἥσυχον ὕμμα δέχου.  
οὐ γὰρ ἔχω, μέγα δὴ τι θέλων, σέθεν ἄξια δοῦναι,  
θαπτομένου περ ἀπών· οὐ γὰρ ἔνεστιν ἔμοι·  
οὐδὲ μελικρήτου παρέχειν γάνος· εἰ γὰρ ἐνείη  
καὶ σε χεροῖν ψάσσαι καὶ σέ ποτ' αὖθις ἰδεῖν,  
δάκρυσί τε σπονδαῖς τε κᾶρα φίλον ἀμφιπολεῦειν  
ὀφθαλμούς θ' ἱερούς σοὺς ἱερόν τε δέμας.  
εἴθ' ὕφελον· μάλα γὰρ τάδ' ἂν ἀμπαύσειε μερίμνης·  
νῦν δὲ πρόσωθεν ἄνευ σήματος οἶκτον ἄγω·  
οὐδ' ἐπιτυμβίδιον θρηνῶ μέλος, ἀλλ' ἀπαμυνθείς,  
ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθεν ἔχων ἀμφιδακρυτὰ πάθη.  
ἀλλὰ σὺ χαῖρε θανών, καὶ ἔχων γέρας ἴσθι πρὸς ἀνδρῶν  
πρὸς τε θεῶν, ἐνέροις εἴ τις ἔπεςτι θεός.  
χαῖρε γέρον, φίλε χαῖρε πατέρ, πολὺ φέρτατ' αἰοιδῶν  
ὧν ἴδομεν, πολὺ δὴ φέρτατ' ἀεισομένων·  
χαῖρε, καὶ ὕλβον ἔχοις, οἷον γε θανόντες ἔχουσιν,  
ἥσυχίαν ἔχθρας καὶ φιλόττητος ἄτερ.

σήματος οἰχομένου σοι μνήματ' ἐς ὕστερον ἔσται,  
σοὶ τε φίλῃ μνήμῃ μνήματος οἰχομένου·  
ὃν Χάριτες κλαίουσι θεαί, κλαίει δ' Ἀφροδίτη  
καλλιχόροις Μουσῶν τερψαμένη στεφάνοις.  
οὐ γὰρ ἅπαξ ἱερούς ποτε γῆρας ἔτριψεν αἰοδούς·  
τήνδε τὸ σὸν φαίνει μνήμα τόδ' ἀγλαΐαν.  
ἧ φίλος ἦς μακάρεσσι βροτὸς, σοὶ δ' εἴ τι Νύμφαι  
δῶρα ποθεινὰ νέμειν, ὕστατα δῶρ', ἔδοσαν.  
τὰς νῦν χάλκεος ὕπνος ἔβη καὶ ἀνήνεμος αἰὼν,  
καὶ συνθαπτομένοι μοῖραν ἔχουσι μίαν.  
εὐδεις καὶ σὺ, καλὸν καὶ ἀγάκλυτον ἐν χθονὶ κοίλῃ  
ὕπνον ἐφικόμενος, σῆς ἀπνόσφιν πάτρας,  
τῇλε παρὰ ξανθοῦ Τυρσηνικὸν οἶδμα καθεύδεις  
νάματος, ἣ δ' ἔτι σὴ μαῖά σε γαῖα ποθεῖ,  
ἀλλ' ἀπέχεις, καὶ πρόσθε φιλόπτολις ὦν περ ἀπείπας·  
εὐδε· μάκαρ δ' ἡμῖν οὐδ' ἀμέγαρτος ἔσει.  
βαίως ἐπιχθονίων γε χρόνος καὶ μοῖρα κρατῆσει,  
τοὺς δέ ποτ' εὐφροσύνῃ τοὺς δέ ποτ' ἄλγος ἔχει  
πολλάκι δ' ἢ βλάπτει φάος ἢ σκότος ἀσφικαλύπτει  
μυρομένους, δάκνει δ' ὕπνος ἐγρηγορότας·  
οὐδ' ἔθ' ὅτ' ἐν τύμβοισι κατέδραθεν ὄμμα θανόντων  
ἢ σκότος ἢ τι φάος δήξεται ἡελίου·  
οὐδ' ὄναρ ἐννύχιον καὶ ἐνύπνιον οὐδ' ὕπαρ ἔσται  
ἢ ποτε τερπομένοις ἢ ποτ' ὀδυρομένοις·  
ἀλλ' ἕνα πάντες αἰεὶ θάκον συνέχουσι καὶ ἔδραν  
ἀντὶ βροτῆς ἄβροτον, κάλλιστον ἄντι κακῆς.

## THE ARGUMENT

*and wife of Æneus*

ALTHÆA, daughter of Thestius and Eurythemis, queen of Calydon, being with child of Meleager her first-born son, dreamed that she brought forth a brand burning ; and upon his birth came the three Fates and prophesied of him three things, namely these ; that he should have great strength of his hands, and good fortune in this life, and that he should live no longer when the brand then in the fire were consumed : wherefore his mother plucked it forth and kept it by her. And the child being a man grown sailed with Jason after the fleece of gold, and won himself great praise of all men living ; and when the tribes of the north and west made war upon Ætolia, he fought against their army and scattered it. But Artemis, having at the first stirred up these tribes to war against Æneus king of Calydon, because he had offered sacrifice to all the gods saving her alone, but her he had forgotten to honour, was yet more wroth because of the destruction of this army, and sent upon the land of Calydon a wild boar which slew many and wasted all their increase, but him could none slay, and many went against him and perished. Then were all the chief men of Greece gathered together, and among them Atalanta daughter of Iasius the Arcadian, a virgin ; for whose sake Artemis let slay the boar, seeing she favoured the

## THE ARGUMENT

maiden greatly ; and Meleager having despatched it gave the spoil thereof to Atalanta, as one beyond measure enamoured of her ; but the brethren of Althæa his mother, Toxeus and Plexippus, with such others as misliked that she only should bear off the praise whereas many had borne the labour, laid wait for her to take away her spoil ; but Meleager fought against them and slew them : whom when Althæa their sister beheld and knew to be slain of her son, she waxed for wrath and sorrow like as one mad, and taking the brand whereby the measure of her son's life was meted to him, she cast it upon a fire ; and with the wasting thereof his life likewise wasted away, that being brought back to his father's house he died in a brief space ; and his mother also endured not long after for very sorrow ; and this was his end, and the end of that hunting.

## THE PERSONS

CHIEF HUNTSMAN

CHORUS

ALTHÆA

MELEAGER

ÆNEUS

ATALANTA

TOXEUS

PLEXIPPUS

HERALD

MESSENGER

SECOND MESSENGER



ἴστω δ' ὅστις οὐχ ὑπόπτερος  
φροντίσιν δαεῖς,  
τὰν ἅ παιδολύμας τάλαινα Θεστιάς μήσατο  
πυρδαῇ τινα πρόνοιαν,  
καταίθουσα παιδὸς δαφοινὸν  
δαλὸν ἥλικ', ἐπεὶ μολῶν  
ματρώθεν κελάδησε ;  
σύμμετρόν τε διαί βίου  
μοιρόκραντον ἐς ἄμαρ.

ÆSCH. *Cho.* 602-612.

## ATALANTA IN CALYDON

### CHIEF HUNTSMAN

MAIDEN, and mistress of the months and stars  
Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven,  
Goddess whom all gods love with threefold heart,  
Being treble in thy divided deity,  
A light for dead men and dark hours, a foot  
Swift on the hills as morning, and a hand  
To all things fierce and fleet that roar and range  
Mortal, with gentler shafts than snow or sleep ;  
Hear now and help and lift no violent hand,  
But favourable and fair as thine eye's beam  
Hidden and shown in heaven ; for I all night  
Amid the king's hounds and the hunting men  
Have wrought and worshipped toward thee ; nor  
    shall man  
See goodlier hounds or deadlier edge of spears ;  
But for the end, that lies unreached at yet  
Between the hands and on the knees of gods.  
O fair-faced sun, killing the stars and dews  
And dreams and desolation of the night !  
Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow  
Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven,  
And burn and break the dark about thy ways,  
Shot through and through with arrows ; let thine hair  
Lighten as flame above that flameless shell  
Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world

And thy lips kindle with swift beams ; let earth  
Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet  
Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs  
And foam in reddening flakes and flying flowers  
Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs  
Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave  
With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,  
All gold, or shuddering and unfurrowed snow ;  
And all the winds about thee with their wings,  
And fountain-heads of all the watered world ;  
Each horn of Achelœus, and the green  
Euenus, wedded with the straitening sea.  
For in fair time thou comest ; come also thou,  
Twin-born with him, and virgin, Artemis,  
And give our spears their spoil, the wild boar's hide,  
Sent in thine anger against us for sin done  
And bloodless altars without wine or fire.  
Him now consume thou ; for thy sacrifice  
With sanguine-shining steam divides the dawn,  
And one, the maiden rose of all thy maids,  
Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,  
Fair as the snow and footed as the wind,  
From Ladon and well-wooded Mænalus  
Over the firm hills and the fleeting sea  
Hast thou drawn hither, and many an armed king,  
Heroes, the crown of men, like gods in fight.  
Moreover out of all the Ætolian land,  
From the full-flowered Lelantian pasturage  
To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus  
Won from the roaring river and labouring sea  
When the wild god shrank in his horn and fled  
And foamed and lessened through his wrathful fords,  
Leaving clear lands that steamed with sudden sun,  
These virgins with the lightening of the day

Bring thee fresh wreaths and their own sweeter hair,  
Luxurious locks and flower-like mixed with flowers,  
Clean offering, and chaste hymns ; but me the time  
Divides from these things ; whom do thou not less  
Help and give honour, and to mine hounds good speed,  
And edge to spears, and luck to each man's hand.

## CHORUS

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain ;  
And the brown bright nightingale amorous  
Is half assuaged for Itylus,  
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,  
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,  
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,  
With a noise of winds and many rivers,  
With a clamour of waters, and with might ;  
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,  
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet ;  
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,  
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,  
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling ?  
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,  
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring !  
For the stars and the winds are unto her  
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player ;  
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,  
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,  
And all the season of snows and sins ;  
The days dividing lover and lover,  
The light that loses, the night that wins ;  
And time remembered is grief forgotten,  
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,  
And in green underwood and cover  
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,  
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,  
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes  
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit ;  
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,  
And the oat is heard above the lyre,  
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes  
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,  
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,  
Follows with dancing and fills with delight  
The Mænad and the Bassarid ;  
And soft as lips that laugh and hide  
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,  
And screen from seeing and leave in sight  
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair  
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes ;  
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare  
Her bright breast shortening into sighs ;  
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,  
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves  
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare  
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.



## ALTHÆA

What do ye singing ? what is this ye sing ?

## CHORUS

Flowers bring we, and pure lips that please the gods,  
And raiment meet for service : lest the day  
Turn sharp with all its honey in our lips.

## ALTHÆA

Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day,  
Swifter than dreams the white flown feet of sleep ;  
Will ye pray back the night with any prayers ?  
And though the spring put back a little while  
Winter, and snows that plague all men for sin,  
And the iron time of cursing, yet I know  
Spring shall be ruined with the rain, and storm  
Eat up like fire the ashen autumn days.  
I marvel what men do with prayers awake  
Who dream and die with dreaming ; any god,  
Yea the least god of all things called divine,  
Is more than sleep and waking ; yet we say,  
Perchance by praying a man shall match his god.  
For if sleep have no mercy, and man's dreams  
Bite to the blood and burn into the bone,  
What shall this man do waking ? By the gods,  
He shall not pray to dream sweet things to-night,  
Having dreamt once more bitter things than death.

## CHORUS

Queen, but what is it that hath burnt thine heart ?  
For thy speech flickers like a blown-out flame.

ALTHÆA

Look, ye say well, and know not what ye say ;  
For all my sleep is turned into a fire,  
And all my dreams to stuff that kindles it.

CHORUS

Yet one doth well being patient of the gods.

ALTHÆA

Yea, lest they smite us with some four-foot plague.

CHORUS

But when time spreads find out some herb for it.

ALTHÆA

And with their healing herbs infect our blood.

CHORUS

What ails thee to be jealous of their ways ?

ALTHÆA

What if they give us poisonous drinks for wine ?

CHORUS

They have their will ; much talking mends it **not**.

ALTHÆA

And gall for milk, and cursing for a prayer ?

CHORUS

Have they not given life, and the end of life ?

## ALTHÆA

Lo, where they heal, they help not ; thus they do,  
They mock us with a little piteousness,  
And we say prayers, and weep ; but at the last,  
Sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit.

## CHORUS

Small praise man gets dispraising the high gods :  
What have they done that thou dishonourest them ?

## ALTHÆA

First Artemis for all this harried land  
I praise not, and for wasting of the boar  
That mars with tooth and tusk and fiery feet  
Green pasturage and the grace of standing corn  
And meadow and marsh with springs and unblown  
leaves,  
Flocks and swift herds and all that bite sweet grass,  
I praise her not ; what things are these to praise ?

## CHORUS

But when the king did sacrifice, and gave  
Each god fair dues of wheat and blood and wine,  
Her not with bloodshed nor burnt-offering  
Revered he, nor with salt or cloven cake ;  
Wherefore being wroth she plagued the land ; but  
now  
Takes off from us fate and her heavy things.  
Which deed of these twain were not good to praise ?  
For a just deed looks always either way  
With blameless eyes, and mercy is no fault.

## ALTHÆA

Yea, but a curse she hath sent above all these  
To hurt us where she healed us ; and hath lit  
Fire where the old fire went out, and where the wind  
Slackened, hath blown on us with deadlier air.

## CHORUS

What storm is this that tightens all our sail ?

## ALTHÆA

Love, a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam.

## CHORUS

Whence blown, and born under what stormier star ?

## ALTHÆA

Southward across Euenus from the sea.

## CHORUS

Thy speech turns toward Arcadia like blown wind.

## ALTHÆA

Sharp as the north sets when the snows are out.

## CHORUS

Way, for this maiden hath no touch of love.

## ALTHÆA

I would she had sought in some cold gulf of sea  
Love, or in dens where strange beasts lurk, or fire,  
Or snows on the extreme hills, or iron land  
Where no spring is ; I would she had sought therein  
And found, or ever love had found her here.

## CHORUS

She is holier than all holy days or things,  
The sprinkled water or fume of perfect fire ;  
Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers, and filled  
With higher thoughts than heaven ; a maiden clean,  
Pure iron, fashioned for a sword ; and man  
She loves not ; what should one such do with love ?

## ALTHÆA

Look you, I speak not as one light of wit,  
But as a queen speaks, being heart-vexed ; for oft  
I hear my brothers wrangling in mid hall,  
And am not moved ; and my son chiding them,  
And these things nowise move me, but I know  
Foolish and wise men must be to the end,  
And feed myself with patience ; but this most,  
This moves me, that for wise men as for fools  
Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns  
Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.  
And in the end shall no joy come, but grief,  
Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears  
Flower-wise upon the old root of tears brought forth,  
Fruit-wise upon the old flower of tears sprung up,  
Pitiful sighs, and much regrafted pain.  
These things are in my presage, and myself  
Am part of them and know not ; but in dreams  
The gods are heavy on me, and all the fates  
Shed fire across my eyelids mixed with night,  
And burn me blind, and disilluminate  
My sense of seeing, and my perspicuous soul  
Darken with vision ; seeing I see not, hear  
And hearing am not holpen, but mine eyes  
Stain many tender broideries in the bed

Drawn up about my face that I may weep  
And the king wake not ; and my brows and lips  
Tremble and sob in sleeping, like swift flames  
That tremble, or water when it sobs with heat  
Kindled from under ; and my tears fill my breast  
And speck the fair dyed pillows round the king  
With barren showers and salter than the sea,  
Such dreams divide me dreaming ; for long since  
I dreamed that out of this my womb had sprung  
Fire and a firebrand ; this was ere my son,  
Meleager, a goodly flower in fields of fight,  
Felt the light touch him coming forth, and wailed  
Childlike ; but yet he was not ; and in time  
I bare him, and my heart was great ; for yet  
So royally was never strong man born,  
Nor queen so nobly bore as noble a thing  
As this my son was : such a birth God sent  
And such a grace to bear it. Then came in  
Three weaving women, and span each a thread,  
Saying This for strength and That for luck, and one  
Saying Till the brand upon the hearth burn down,  
So long shall this man see good days and live.  
And I with gathered raiment from the bed  
Sprang, and drew forth the brand, and cast on it  
Water, and trod the flame bare-foot, and crushed  
With naked hand spark beaten out of spark  
And blew against and quenched it ; for I said,  
These are the most high Fates that dwell with us,  
And we find favour a little in their sight,  
A little, and more we miss of, and much time  
Foils us ; howbeit they have pitied me, O son,  
And thee most piteous, thee a tenderer thing  
Than any flower of fleshly seed alive.  
Wherefore I kissed and hid him with my hands,  
And covered under arms and hair, and wept,

And feared to touch him with my tears, and laughed ;  
So light a thing was this man, grown so great  
Men cast their heads back, seeing against the sun  
Blaze the armed man carven on his shield, and hear  
The laughter of little bells along the brace  
Ring, as birds singing or flutes blown, and watch,  
High up, the cloven shadow of either plume  
Divide the bright light of the brass, and make  
His helmet as a windy and wintering moon  
Seen through blown cloud and plume-like drift, when  
ships

Drive, and men strive with all the sea, and oars  
Break, and the beaks dip under, drinking death ;  
Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned  
With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,  
And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast  
Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet,  
Murmuring ; but those grey women with bound hair  
Who fright the gods frightened not him ; he laughed  
Seeing them, and pushed out hands to feel and haul  
Distaff and thread, intangible ; but they  
Passed, and I hid the brand, and in my heart  
Laughed likewise, having all my will of heaven.  
But now I know not if to left or right  
The gods have drawn us hither ; for again  
I dreamt, and saw the black brand burst on fire  
As a branch bursts in flower, and saw the flame  
Fade flower-wise, and Death came and with dry lips  
Blew the charred ash into my breast ; and Love  
Trampled the ember and crushed it with swift feet.  
This I have also at heart ; that not for me,  
Not for me only or son of mine, O girls,  
The gods have wrought life, and desire of life,  
Heart's love and heart's division ; but for all



There shines one sun and one wind blows till night.  
And when night comes the wind sinks and the sun,  
And there is no light after, and no storm,  
But sleep and much forgetfulness of things.  
In such wise I gat knowledge of the gods  
Years hence, and heard high sayings of one most wise,  
Eurythemis my mother, who beheld  
With eyes alive and spake with lips of these  
As one on earth disfleshed and disallied  
From breath or blood corruptible ; such gifts  
Time gave her, and an equal soul to these  
And equal face to all things ; thus she said.  
But whatsoever intolerable or glad  
The swift hours weave and unweave, I go hence  
Full of mine own soul, perfect of myself,  
Toward mine and me sufficient ; and what chance  
The gods cast lots for and shake out on us,  
That shall we take, and that much bear withal.  
And now, before these gather to the hunt,  
I will go arm my son and bring him forth,  
Lest love or some man's anger work him harm.

## CHORUS

Before the beginning of years  
There came to the making of man  
Time, with a gift of tears ;  
Grief, with a glass that ran ;  
Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;  
Summer, with flowers that fell ;  
Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
And madness risen from hell ;  
Strength without hands to smite ;  
Love that endures for a breath :  
Night, the shadow of light,  
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand  
Fire, and the falling of tears,  
And a measure of sliding sand  
From under the feet of the years ;  
And froth and drift of the sea ;  
And dust of the labouring earth ;  
And bodies of things to be  
In the houses of death and of birth ;  
And wrought with weeping and laughter,  
And fashioned with loathing and love  
With life before and after  
And death beneath and above,  
For a day and a night and a morrow,  
That his strength might endure for a span  
With travail and heavy sorrow,  
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south  
They gathered as unto strife ;  
They breathed upon his mouth,  
They filled his body with life ;  
Eyesight and speech they wrought  
For the veils of the soul therein,  
A time for labour and thought,  
A time to serve and to sin ;  
They gave him light in his ways,  
And love, and a space for delight,  
And beauty and length of days,  
And night, and sleep in the night.  
His speech is a burning fire ;  
With his lips he travaileth ;  
In his heart is a blind desire,  
In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;

He weaves, and is clothed with derision ;  
Sows, and he shall not reap ;  
His life is a watch or a vision  
Between a sleep and a sleep.

## MELEAGER

O sweet new heaven and air without a star,  
Fair day, be fair and welcome, as to men  
With deeds to do and praise to pluck from thee.  
Come forth a child, born with clear sound and light,  
With laughter and swift limbs and prosperous looks ;  
That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds  
May leave thee memorable and us well sped.

## ALTHÆA

Son, first I praise thy prayer, then bid thee speed ;  
But the gods hear men's hands before their lips,  
And heed beyond all crying and sacrifice  
Light of things done and noise of labouring men.  
But thou, being armed and perfect for the deed,  
Abide ; for like rain-flakes in a wind they grow,  
The men thy fellows, and the choice of the world,  
Bound to root out the tuskèd plague, and leave  
Thanks and safe days and peace in Calydon.

## MELEAGER

For the whole city and all the low-lying land  
Flames, and the soft air sounds with them that come ;  
The gods give all these fruit of all their works.

## ALTHÆA

Set thine eye thither and fix thy spirit and say  
Whom there thou knowest ; for sharp mixed shadow  
and wind

Blown up between the morning and the mist,  
With steam of steeds and flash of bridle or wheel,  
And fire, and parcels of the broken dawn,  
And dust divided by hard light, and spears  
That shine and shift as the edge of wild beasts' eyes,  
Smite upon mine; so fiery their blind edge  
Burns, and bright points break up and baffle day.

## MELEAGER

The first, for many I know not, being far off,  
Peleus the Larissæan, couched with whom  
Sleeps the white sea-bred wife and silver-shod,  
Fair as fled foam, a goddess; and their son  
Most swift and splendid of men's children born,  
Most like a god, full of the future fame.

## ALTHÆA

Who are these shining like one sundered star?

## MELEAGER

Thy sister's sons, a double flower of men.

## ALTHÆA

O sweetest kin to me in all the world,  
O twin-born blood of Leda, gracious heads  
Like kindled lights in untempestuous heaven,  
Fair flower-like stars on the iron foam of fight,  
With what glad heart and kindliness of soul,  
Even to the staining of both eyes with tears  
And kindling of warm eyelids with desire,  
A great way off I greet you, and rejoice  
Seeing you so fair, and moulded like as gods.  
Far off ye come, and least in years of these,  
But lordliest, but worth love to look upon.

## MELEAGER

Even such (for sailing hither I saw far hence,  
And where Eurotas hollows his moist rock  
Nigh Sparta with a strenuous-hearted stream)  
Even such I saw their sisters ; one swan-white,  
The little Helen, and less fair than she  
Fair Clytæmnestra, grave as pasturing fawns  
Who feed and fear some arrow ; but at whiles,  
As one smitten with love or wrung with joy,  
She laughs and lightens with her eyes, and then  
Weeps ; whereat Helen, having laughed, weeps too,  
And the other chides her, and she being chid speaks  
nought,  
But cheeks and lips and eyelids kisses her,  
Laughing ; so fare they, as in their bloomless bud  
And full of unblown life, the blood of gods.

## ALTHÆA

Sweet days befall them and good loves and lords,  
And tender and temperate honours of the hearth,  
Peace, and a perfect life and blameless bed.  
But who shows next an eagle wrought in gold,  
That flames and beats broad wings against the sun  
And with void mouth gapes after emptier prey ?

## MELEAGER

Know by that sign the reign of Telamon  
Between the fierce mouths of the encountering brine  
On the strait reefs of twice-washed Salamis.

## ALTHÆA

For like one great of hand he bears himself,  
Vine-chapleted, with savours of the sea,

Glittering as wine and moving as a wave.  
But who girt round there roughly follows him ?

## MELEAGER

Ancæus, great of hand, an iron bulk,  
Two-edged for fight as the axe against his arm,  
Who drives against the surge of stormy spears  
Full-sailed ; him Cepheus follows, his twin-born,  
Chief name next his of all Arcadian men.

## ALTHÆA

Praise be with men abroad ; chaste lives with us,  
Home-keeping days and household reverences.

## MELEAGER

Next by the left unsandalled foot know thou  
The sail and oar of this Ætolian land,  
Thy brethren, Toxeus and the violent-souled  
Plexippus, over-swift with hand and tongue ;  
For hands are fruitful, but the ignorant mouth  
Blows and corrupts their work with barren breath.

## ALTHÆA

Speech too bears fruit, being worthy ; and air blows  
down  
Things poisonous, and high-seated violences,  
And with charmed words and songs have men put  
out  
Wild evil, and the fire of tyrannies.

## MELEAGER

Yea, all things have they, save the gods and love.

## ALTHÆA

Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained.

MELEAGER

Law lives upon their lips whom these applaud.

ALTHÆA

How sayest thou these? what god applauds new things?

MELEAGER

Zeus, who hath fear and custom under foot.

ALTHÆA

But loves not laws thrown down and lives awry.

MELEAGER

Yet is not less himself than his own law.

ALTHÆA

Nor shifts and shuffles old things up and down.

MELEAGER

But what he will remoulds and discreates.

ALTHÆA

Much, but not this, that each thing live its life.

MELEAGER

Nor only live, but lighten and lift up higher.

ALTHÆA

Pride breaks itself, and too much gained is gone.

MELEAGER

Things gained are gone, but great things done endure.



## ALTHÆA

Child, if a man serve law through all his life  
And with his whole heart worship, him all gods  
Praise ; but who loves it only with his lips,  
And not in heart and deed desiring it  
Hides a perverse will with obsequious words,  
Him heaven infatuates and his twin-born fate  
Tracks, and gains on him, scenting sins far off,  
And the swift hounds of violent death devour.  
Be man at one with equal-minded gods,  
So shall he prosper ; not through laws torn up,  
Violated rule and a new face of things.  
A woman armed makes war upon herself,  
Unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont  
And the sweet common honour that she hath,  
Love, and the cry of children, and the hand  
Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.  
This doth she, being unloved ; whom if one love,  
Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars  
Are deadlier than her lips or braided hair.  
For of the one comes poison, and a curse  
Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.  
But thou, son, be not filled with evil dreams,  
Nor with desire of these things ; for with time  
Blind love burns out ; but if one feed it full  
Till some discolouring stain dyes all his life,  
He shall keep nothing praiseworthy, nor die  
The sweet wise death of old men honourable,  
Who have lived out all the length of all their years  
Blameless, and seen well-pleased the face of gods,  
And without shame and without fear have wrought  
Things memorable, and while their days held out  
In sight of all men and the sun's great light

Have gat them glory and given of their own praise  
To the earth that bare them and the day that bred,  
Home friends and far-off hospitalities,  
And filled with gracious and memorial fame  
Lands loved of summer or washed by violent seas,  
Towns populous and many unfooted ways,  
And alien lips and native with their own.  
But when white age and venerable death  
Mow down the strength and life within their limbs,  
Drain out the blood and darken their clear eyes,  
Immortal honour is on them, having past  
Through splendid life and death desirable  
To the clear seat and remote throne of souls,  
Lands indiscoverable in the unheard-of west,  
Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea  
Rolls without wind for ever, and the snow  
There shows not her white wings and windy feet,  
Nor thunder nor swift rain saith anything,  
Nor the sun burns, but all things rest and thrive ;  
And these, filled full of days, divine and dead,  
Sages and singers fiery from the god,  
And such as loved their land and all things good  
And, best beloved of best men, liberty,  
Free lives and lips, free hands of men free-born,  
And whatsoever on earth was honourable  
And whosoever of all the ephemeral seed,  
Live there a life no liker to the gods  
But nearer than their life of terrene days.  
Love thou such life and look for such a death.  
But from the light and fiery dreams of love  
Spring heavy sorrows and a sleepless life,  
Visions not dreams, whose lids no charm shall close  
Nor song assuage them waking ; and swift death  
Crushes with sterile feet the unripening ear,

Treads out the timeless vintage ; whom do thou  
Eschewing embrace the luck of this thy life,  
Not without honour ; and it shall bear to thee  
Such fruit as men reap from spent hours and wear,  
Few men, but happy ; of whom be thou, O son,  
Happiest, if thou submit thy soul to fate,  
And set thine eyes and heart on hopes high-born  
And divine deeds and abstinence divine.  
So shalt thou be toward all men all thy days  
As light and might communicable, and burn  
From heaven among the stars above the hours,  
And break not as a man breaks nor burn down :  
For to whom other of all heroic names  
Have the gods given his life in hand as thine ?  
And gloriously hast thou lived, and made thy life  
To me that bare thee and to all men born  
Thankworthy, a praise for ever ; and hast won fame  
When wild wars broke all round thy father's house,  
And the mad people of windy mountain ways  
Laid spears against us like a sea, and all  
Ætolia thundered with Thessalian hoofs ;  
Yet these, as wind baffles the foam, and beats  
Straight back the relaxed ripple, didst thou break  
And loosen all their lances, till undone  
And man from man they fell ; for ye twain stood  
God against god, Ares and Artemis,  
And thou the mightier ; wherefore she unleashed  
A sharp-toothed curse thou too shalt overcome ;  
For in the greener blossom of thy life  
Ere the full blade caught flower, and when time  
gave  
Respite, thou didst not slacken soul nor sleep,  
But with great hand and heart seek praise of men  
Out of sharp straits and many a grievous thing,

Seeing the strange foam of undivided seas  
On channels never sailed in, and by shores  
Where the old winds cease not blowing, and all the  
    night  
Thunders, and day is no delight to men.

## CHORUS

Meleager, a noble wisdom and fair words  
The gods have given this woman ; hear thou these.

## MELEAGER

O mother, I am not fain to strive in speech  
Nor set my mouth against thee, who art wise  
Even as they say and full of sacred words.  
But one thing I know surely, and cleave to this ;  
That though I be not subtle of wit as thou  
Nor womanlike to weave sweet words, and melt  
Mutable minds of wise men as with fire,  
I too, doing justly and reverencing the gods,  
Shall not want wit to see what things be right.  
For whom they love and whom reject, being gods,  
There is no man but seeth, and in good time  
Submits himself, refraining all his heart.  
And I too as thou sayest have seen great things ;  
Seen elsewhere, but chiefly when the sail  
First caught between stretched ropes the roaring  
    west,  
And all our oars smote eastward, and the wind  
First flung round faces of seafaring men  
White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam,  
And the first furrow in virginal green sea  
Followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine,  
And closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath  
Lips close and heart subsides ; and closing, shone

Sunlike with many a Nereid's hair, and moved  
Round many a trembling mouth of doubtful gods,  
Risen out of sunless and sonorous gulfs  
Through waning water and into shallow light,  
That watched us ; and when flying the dove was  
snared

As with men's hands, but we shot after and sped  
Clear through the irremeable Symplegades ;  
And chiefliest when hoar beach and herbless cliff  
Stood out ahead from Colchis, and we heard  
Clefs hoarse with wind, and saw through narrowing  
reefs

The lightning of the intolerable wave  
Flash, and the white wet flame of breakers burn  
Far under a kindling south-wind, as a lamp  
Burns and bends all its blowing flame one way ;  
Wild heights untravellered of the wind, and vales  
Cloven seaward by their violent streams, and white  
With bitter flowers and bright salt scurf of brine ;  
Heard sweep their sharp swift gales, and bowing  
birdwise

Shriek with birds' voices, and with furious feet  
Tread loose the long skirts of a storm ; and saw  
The whole white Euxine clash together and fall  
Full-mouthed, and thunderous from a thousand  
throats :

Yet we drew thither and won the fleece and won  
Medea, deadlier than the sea ; but there  
Seeing many a wonder and fearful things to men  
I saw not one thing like this one seen here,  
Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,  
Faultless ; whom I that love not, being unlike,  
Fear, and give honour, and choose from all the  
gods.

## CENEUS

Lady, the daughter of Thestius, and thou, son,  
Not ignorant of your strife nor light of wit,  
Scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent  
fire,

I come to judge between you, but a king  
Full of past days and wise from years endured.  
Nor thee I praise, who art fain to undo things done :  
Nor thee, who art swift to esteem them overmuch.  
For what the hours have given is given, and this  
Changeless ; howbeit these change, and in good  
time

Devise new things and good, not one thing still.  
Us have they sent now at our need for help  
Among men armed a woman, foreign born,  
Virgin, not like the natural flower of things  
That grows and bears and brings forth fruit and  
dies ;

Unlovable, no light for a husband's house,  
Espoused ; a glory among unwedded girls,  
And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.  
These too we honour in honouring her ; but thou,  
Abstain thy feet from following, and thine eyes  
From amorous touch ; nor set toward hers thine  
heart,

Son, lest hate bear no deadlier fruit than love.

## ALTHÆA

O king, thou art wise, but wisdom halts ; and just,  
But the gods love not justice more than fate,  
And smite the righteous and the violent mouth,  
And mix with insolent blood the reverent man's,  
And bruise the holier as the lying lips.



Enough ; for wise words fail me, and my heart  
 Takes fire and trembles flamewise, O my son,  
 O child, for thine head's sake ; mine eyes wax thick,  
 Turning toward thee, so goodly a weaponed man,  
 So glorious ; and for love of thine own eyes  
 They are darkened, and tears burn them, fierce as  
 fire,

And my lips pause and my soul sinks with love.  
 But by thine hand, by thy sweet life and eyes,  
 By thy great heart and these clasped knees, O son,  
 I pray thee that thou slay me not with thee.  
 For there was never a mother woman-born  
 Loved her sons better ; and never a queen of men  
 More perfect in her heart toward whom she loved.  
 For what lies light on many and they forget,  
 Small things and transitory as a wind o' the sea,  
 I forget never ; I have seen thee all thine years  
 A man in arms, strong and a joy to men  
 Seeing thine head glitter and thine hand burn its way  
 Through a heavy and iron furrow of sundering  
 spears ;

But always also a flower of three suns old,  
 The small one thing that lying drew down my life  
 To lie with thee and feed thee ; a child and weak,  
 Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me.  
 Who then sought to thee ? who gat help ? who knew  
 If thou wert goodly ? nay, no man at all.  
 Or what sea saw thee, or sounded with thine oar,  
 Child ? or what strange land shone with war through  
 thee ?

But fair for me thou wert, O little life,  
 Fruitless, the fruit of mine own flesh, and blind,  
 More than much gold, ungrown, a foolish flower.  
 For silver nor bright snow nor feather of foam

Was whiter, and no gold yellower than thine hair,  
O child, my child ; and now thou art lordlier grown,  
Not lovelier, nor a new thing in mine eyes,  
I charge thee by thy soul and this my breast,  
Fear thou the gods and me and thine own heart,  
Lest all these turn against thee ; for who knows  
What wind upon what wave of altering time  
Shall speak a storm and blow calamity ?  
And there is nothing stabile in the world  
But the gods break it ; yet not less, fair son,  
If but one thing be stronger, if one endure,  
Surely the bitter and the rooted love  
That burns between us, going from me to thee,  
Shall more endure than all things. What dost thou,  
Following strange loves ? why wilt thou kill mine  
heart ?

Lo, I talk wild and windy words, and fall  
From my clear wits, and seem of mine own self  
Dethroned, dispraised, disseated ; and my mind,  
That was my crown, breaks, and mine heart is gone,  
And I am naked of my soul, and stand  
Ashamed, as a mean woman ; take thou thought :  
Live if thou wilt, and if thou wilt not, look,  
The gods have given thee life to lose or keep,  
Thou shalt not die as men die, but thine end  
Fallen upon thee shall break me unaware.

## MELEAGER

Queen, my whole heart is molten with thy tears,  
And my limbs yearn with pity of thee, and love  
Compels with grief mine eyes and labouring breath ;  
For what thou art I know thee, and this thy breast  
And thy fair eyes I worship, and am bound  
Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.



For there is nothing terribler to men  
Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.  
But what shall be let be ; for us the day  
Once only lives a little, and is not found.  
Time and the fruitful hour are more than we,  
And these lay hold upon us ; but thou, God,  
Zeus, the sole steersman of the helm of things,  
Father, be swift to see us, and as thou wilt  
Help : or if adverse, as thou wilt, refrain.

## CHORUS

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair ; thou art  
goodly, O Love ;  
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a  
dove.  
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the  
sea ;  
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of  
thee.  
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of  
fire ;  
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of  
desire ;  
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid ;  
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes  
afraid ;  
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal  
breath :  
But Fate is the name of her ; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born  
Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,  
Blood-red and bitter of fruit,  
And the seed of it laughter and tears,

And the leaves of it madness and scorn ;  
A bitter flower from the bud,  
Sprung of the sea without root,  
Sprung without graft from the years.

The web of the world was untorn  
That is woven of the day on the night,  
The hair of the hours was not white  
Nor the raiment of time overworn,  
When a wonder, a world's delight,  
A perilous goddess was born ;  
And the waves of the sea as she came  
Clove, and the foam at her feet,  
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth  
A fleshly blossom, a flame  
Filling the heavens with heat  
To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,  
And men upon earth that hear  
Sweet articulate words  
Sweetly divided apart,  
And in shallow and channel and mere  
The rapid and footless herds,  
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,  
She is fair, she is white like a dove,  
And the life of the world in her breath  
Breathes, and is born at her birth ;  
For they knew thee for mother of love,  
And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,  
Mother, when winds were at ease,  
As a flower of the springtime of corn,  
A flower of the foam of the seas ?  
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,  
Aphrodite, a mother of strife ;  
For before thee some rest was on earth,  
A little respite from tears,  
A little pleasure of life ;  
For life was not then as thou art,  
But as one that waxeth in years  
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife ;  
Earth had no thorn, and desire  
No sting, neither death any dart ;  
What hadst thou to do amongst these,  
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,  
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,  
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas  
As an ear from a seed of corn,  
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,  
As a ray shed forth of the morn,  
For division of soul and disease,  
For a dart and a sting and a thorn ?  
What ailed thee then to be born ?

Was there not evil enough,  
Mother, and anguish on earth  
Born with a man at his birth,  
Wastes underfoot, and above  
Storm out of heaven, and dearth  
Shaken down from the shining thereof,  
Wrecks from afar overseas  
And peril of shallow and firth,

And tears that spring and increase  
In the barren places of mirth,  
That thou, having wings as a dove,  
Being girt with desire for a girth,  
That thou must come after these,  
That thou must lay on him love ?

Thou shouldst not so have been born :  
But death should have risen with thee,  
Mother, and visible fear,  
Grief, and the wringing of hands,  
And noise of many that mourn ;  
The smitten bosom, the knee  
Bowed, and in each man's ear  
A cry as of perishing lands,  
A moan as of people in prison,  
A tumult of infinite griefs ;  
And thunder of storm on the sands,  
And wailing of wives on the shore ;  
And under thee newly arisen  
Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,  
Fierce air and violent light ;  
Sail rent and sundering oar,  
Darkness, and noises of night ;  
Clashing of streams in the sea,  
Wave against wave as a sword,  
Clamour of currents, and foam ;  
Rains making ruin on earth,  
Winds that wax ravenous and roam  
As wolves in a wolfish horde ;  
Fruits growing faint in the tree,  
And blind things dead in their birth ;  
Famine, and blighting of corn,  
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of ; but thee  
 Who shall discern or declare ?  
 In the uttermost ends of the sea  
 The light of thine eyelids and hair,  
 The light of thy bosom as fire  
 Between the wheel of the sun  
 And the flying flames of the air ?  
 Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,  
 But abide with despair and desire  
 And the crying of armies undone,  
 Lamentation of one with another  
 And breaking of city by city ;  
 The dividing of friend against friend,  
 The severing of brother and brother ;  
 Wilt thou utterly bring to an end ?  
 Have mercy, mother !

For against all men from of old  
 Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,  
 And cast out gods from their places.  
 These things are spoken of thee.  
 Strong kings and goodly with gold  
 Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,  
 And made their kingdoms and races  
 As dust and surf of the sea.  
 All these, overburdened with woes  
 And with length of their days waxen weak,  
 Thou slewest ; and sentest moreover  
 Upon Tyro an evil thing,  
 Rent hair and a fetter and blows  
 Making bloody the flower of the cheek,  
 Though she lay by a god as a lover,  
 Though fair, and the seed of a king.

For of old, being full of thy fire,  
She endured not longer to wear  
On her bosom a saffron vest,  
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver ;  
Being mixed and made one through desire  
With Enipeus, and all her hair  
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast  
Filled full of the foam of the river.

## ATALANTA

Sun, and clear light among green hills, and day  
Late risen and long sought after, and you just gods  
Whose hands divide anguish and recompense,  
But first the sun's white sister, a maid in heaven,  
On earth of all maids worshipped—hail, and hear,  
And witness with me if not without sign sent,  
Not without rule and reverence, I a maid  
Hallowed, and huntress holy as whom I serve,  
Here in your sight and eyeshot of these men  
Stand, girt as they toward hunting, and my shafts  
Drawn ; wherefore all ye stand up on my side,  
If I be pure and all ye righteous gods,  
Lest one revile me, a woman, yet no wife,  
That bear a spear for spindle, and this bow strung  
For a web woven ; and with pure lips salute  
Heaven, and the face of all the gods, and dawn  
Filling with maiden flames and maiden flowers  
The starless fold o' the stars, and making sweet  
The warm wan heights of the air, moon-trodden ways  
And breathless gates and extreme hills of heaven.  
Whom, having offered water and bloodless gifts,  
Flowers, and a golden circlet of pure hair,  
Next Artemis I bid be favourable  
And make this day all golden, hers and ours,

Gracious and good and white to the unblamed end.  
But thou, O well-beloved, of all my days  
Bid it be fruitful, and a crown for all,  
To bring forth leaves and bind round all my hair  
With perfect chaplets woven for thine of thee.  
For not without the word of thy chaste mouth,  
For not without law given and clean command,  
Across the white straits of the running sea  
From Elis even to the Acheloïan horn,  
I with clear winds came hither and gentle gods,  
Far off my father's house, and left uncheered  
Iasius, and uncheered the Arcadian hills  
And all their green-haired waters, and all woods  
Disconsolate, to hear no horn of mine  
Blown, and behold no flash of swift white feet.

## MELEAGER

For thy name's sake and awe toward thy chaste head,  
O holiest Atalanta, no man dares  
Praise thee, though fairer than whom all men praise,  
And godlike for thy grace of hallowed hair  
And holy habit of thine eyes, and feet  
That make the blown foam neither swift nor white  
Though the wind winnow and whirl it ; yet we praise  
Gods, found because of thee adorable  
And for thy sake praiseworthy from all men :  
Thee therefore we praise also, thee as these,  
Pure, and a light lit at the hands of gods.

## TOXEUS

How long will ye whet spears with eloquence,  
Fight, and kill beasts dry-handed with sweet words ?  
Cease, or talk still and slay thy boars at home.



PLEXIPPUS

Why, if she ride among us for a man,  
Sit thou for her and spin ; a man grown girl  
Is worth a woman weaponed ; sit thou here.

MELEAGER

Peace, and be wise ; no gods love idle speech.

PLEXIPPUS

Nor any man a man's mouth woman-tongued.

MELEAGER

For my lips bite not sharper than mine hands.

PLEXIPPUS

Nay, both bite soft, but no whit softly mine.

MELEAGER

Keep thine hands clean ; they have time enough to  
stain.

PLEXIPPUS

For thine shall rest and wax not red to-day.

MELEAGER

Have all thy will of words ; talk out thine heart.

ALTHÆA

Refrain your lips, O brethren, and my son,  
Lest words turn snakes and bite you uttering them.

TOXEUS

Except she give her blood before the gods,  
What profit shall a maid be among men ?



PLEXIPPUS

Let her come crowned and stretch her throat for a  
 knife,  
 Bleat out her spirit and die, and so shall men  
 Through her too prosper and through prosperous  
 gods,  
 But nowise through her living ; shall she live  
 A flower-bud of the flower-bed, or sweet fruit  
 For kisses and the honey-making mouth,  
 And play the shield for strong men and the spear ?  
 Then shall the heifer and her mate lock horns,  
 And the bride overbear the groom, and men  
 Gods ; for no less division sunders these ;  
 Since all things made are seasonable in time,  
 But if one alter unseasonable are all.  
 But thou, O Zeus, hear me that I may slay  
 This beast before thee and no man halve with me  
 Nor woman, lest these mock thee, though a god,  
 Who hast made men strong, and thou being wise be  
 held  
 Foolish ; for wise is that thing which endures.

ATALANTA

Men, and the chosen of all this people, and thou,  
 King, I beseech you a little bear with me.  
 For if my life be shameful that I live,  
 Let the gods witness and their wrath ; but these  
 Cast no such word against me. Thou, O mine,  
 O holy, O happy goddess, if I sin  
 Changing the words of women and the works  
 For spears and strange men's faces, hast not thou  
 One shaft of all thy sudden seven that pierced  
 Seven through the bosom or shining throat or side,

All couched about one mother's loosening knees,  
All holy born, engrafted of Tantalus?  
But if toward any of you I am overbold  
That take thus much upon me, let him think  
How I, for all my forest holiness,  
Fame, and this armed and iron maidenhood,  
Pay thus much also ; I shall have no man's love  
For ever, and no face of children born  
Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes  
For ever, nor being dead shall kings my sons  
Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughters' cheeks  
Burn ; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,  
But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,  
Far off from flowers or any bed of man,  
Shall my life be for ever : me the snows  
That face the first o' the morning, and cold hills  
Full of the land-wind and sea-travelling storms  
And many a wandering wing of noisy nights  
That know the thunder and hear the thickening  
wolves—

Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods  
That talk with many winds and gods, the hours  
Re-risen, and white divisions of the dawn,  
Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed  
And streams that murmur of the mother snow—  
Me these allure, and know me ; but no man  
Knows, and my goddess only. Lo now, see  
If one of all you these things vex at all.  
Would God that any of you had all the praise  
And I no manner of memory when I die,  
So might I show before her perfect eyes  
Pure, whom I follow, a maiden to my death.  
But for the rest let all have all they will ;  
For is it a grief to you that I have part,

Being woman merely, in your male might and deeds  
Done by main strength? yet in my body is throned  
As great a heart, and in my spirit, O men,  
I have not less of godlike. Evil it were  
That one a coward should mix with you, one hand  
Fearful, one eye abase itself; and these  
Well might ye hate and well revile, not me.  
For not the difference of the several flesh  
Being vile or noble or beautiful or base  
Makes praiseworthy, but purer spirit and heart  
Higher than these meaner mouths and limbs, that  
feed,

Rise, rest, and are and are not; and for me,  
What should I say? but by the gods of the world  
And this my maiden body, by all oaths  
That bind the tongue of men and the evil will,  
I am not mighty-minded, nor desire  
Crowns, nor the spoil of slain things nor the fame;  
Feed ye on these, eat and wax fat; cry out,  
Laugh, having eaten, and leap without a lyre,  
Sing, mix the wind with clamour, smite and shake  
Sonorous timbrels and tumultuous hair,  
And fill the dance up with tempestuous feet,  
For I will none; but having prayed my prayers  
And made thank-offering for prosperities,  
I shall go hence and no man see me more.  
What thing is this for you to shout me down,  
What, for a man to grudge me this my life  
As it were envious of all yours, and I  
A thief of reputations? nay, for now,  
If there be any highest in heaven, a god  
Above all thrones and thunders of the gods  
Throned, and the wheel of the world roll under him,  
Judge he between me and all of you, and see

If I transgress at all : but ye, refrain  
Transgressing hands and reinless mouths, and keep  
Silence, lest by much foam of violent words  
And proper poison of your lips ye die.

## CENEUS

O flower of Tegea, maiden, fleetest foot  
And holiest head of women, have good cheer  
Of thy good words : but ye, depart with her  
In peace and reverence, each with blameless eye  
Following his fate ; exalt your hands and hearts,  
Strike, cease not, arrow on arrow and wound on  
wound,  
And go with gods and with the gods return.

## CHORUS

Who hath given man speech ? or who hath set  
therein  
A thorn for peril and a snare for sin ?  
For in the word his life is and his breath,  
And in the word his death,  
That madness and the infatuate heart may breed  
From the word's womb the deed  
And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,  
Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die—  
Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,  
Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he  
's perishable and plaintive, clothed with care  
And mutable as sand,  
But death is strong and full of blood and fair  
And perdurable and like a lord of land ?  
Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see  
Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand  
And thy life-days from thee.

For the gods very subtly fashion  
 Madness with sadness upon earth :  
 Not knowing in any wise compassion,  
 Nor holding pity of any worth ;  
 And many things they have given and taken,  
 And wrought and ruined many things ;  
 The firm land have they loosed and shaken,  
 And sealed the sea with all her springs ;  
 They have wearied time with heavy burdens  
 And vexed the lips of life with breath :  
 Set men to labour and given them guerdons,  
 Death, and great darkness after death :  
 Put moans into the bridal measure  
 And on the bridal wools a stain ;  
 And circled pain about with pleasure,  
 And girdled pleasure about with pain ;  
 And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire  
 For extreme loathing and supreme desire.

What shall be done with all these tears of ours ?  
 Shall they make watersprings in the fair heaven  
 To bathe the brows of morning ? or like flowers  
 Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,  
 Or made the raiment of the weeping Seven ?  
 Or rather, O our masters, shall they be  
 Food for the famine of the grievous sea,  
 A great well-head of lamentation  
 Satiating the sad gods ? or fall and flow  
 Among the years and seasons to and fro,  
 And wash their feet with tribulation  
 And fill them full with grieving ere they go ?  
 Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,  
 Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold  
 But all we smite thereat in vain ;

Smite the gates barred with groanings manifold,

But all the floors are paven with our pain.

Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes,

With breaking of the bosom, and with sighs,

We labour, and are clad and fed with grief

And filled with days we would not fain behold

And nights we would not hear of ; we wax old,

All we wax old and wither like a leaf.

We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and  
moon ;

Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,

Black flowers and white, that perish ; and the noon

As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.

A little fruit a little while is ours,

And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one

Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,

Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,

And stir with soft imperishable breath

The bubbling bitterness of life and death,

And hold it to our lips and laugh ; but they

Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,

Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,

The lips that made us and the hands that slay ;

Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to  
none,

Change and be subject to the secular sway

And terrene revolution of the sun.

Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.

I would the wine of time, made sharp and sweet

With multitudinous days and nights and tears

And many mixing savours of strange years,



Were no more trodden of them under feet,  
Cast out and spilt about their holy places :  
That life were given them as a fruit to eat  
And death to drink as water ; that the light  
Might ebb, drawn backward from their eyes, and night  
Hide for one hour the imperishable faces.  
That they might rise up sad in heaven, and know  
Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young snow,  
One cold as blight of dew and ruinous rain ;  
Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be  
Awhile as all things born with us and we,  
And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain.

For now we know not of them ; but one saith  
The gods are gracious, praising God ; and one,  
When hast thou seen ? or hast thou felt his breath  
Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,  
Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death ?  
None hath beheld him, none  
Seen above other gods and shapes of things,  
Swift without feet and flying without wings,  
Intolerable, not clad with death or life,  
Insatiable, not known of night or day,  
The lord of love and loathing and of strife  
Who gives a star and takes a sun away ;  
Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife  
To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay ;  
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame  
And binds the great sea with a little sand ;  
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame ;  
Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand ;  
Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,  
Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,  
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod ;  
The supreme evil, God.

Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,  
One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,  
And made us transitory and hazardous,

Light things and slight ;

Yet have men praised thee, saying, He hath made  
man thus,

And he doeth right.

Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten ; thou hast  
laid

Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,

Live : and again thou hast said, Yield up your  
breath,

And with thy right hand laid upon us death.

Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with  
dreams,

Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be ;

Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant  
streams,

In the end thou hast made them bitter with the  
sea.

Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men ;

Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears ;

Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again ;

With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and  
ears.

Therefore because thou art strong, our father, and  
we

Feeble ; and thou art against us, and thine hand  
Constrains us in the shallows of the sea

And breaks us at the limits of the land ;

Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,

And loosed the hours like arrows ; and let fall  
Sins and wild words and many a wingèd woe

And wars among us, and one end of all ;



Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet  
Are as a rushing water when the skies  
Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat  
And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes ;  
Because thou art over all who are over us ;  
Because thy name is life and our name death ;  
Because thou art cruel and men are piteous,  
And our hands labour and thine hand scattereth ;  
Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,  
Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,  
At least we witness of thee ere we die  
That these things are not otherwise, but thus ;  
That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,  
That all men even as I, *ο γαρ ολοι*  
All we are against thee, against thee, O God most  
high.

But ye, keep ye on earth  
Your lips from over-speech,  
Loud words and longing are so little worth ;  
And the end is hard to reach.  
For silence after grievous things is good,  
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,  
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,  
And lordship of the soul.  
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,  
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root ;  
For words divide and rend ;  
But silence is most noble till the end.

## ALTHÆA

I heard within the house a cry of news  
And came forth eastward hither, where the dawn  
Cheers first these warder gods that face the sun

And next our eyes unrisen ; for unaware  
Came clashes of swift hoofs and trampling feet  
And through the windy pillared corridor  
Light sharper than the frequent flames of day  
That daily fill it from the fiery dawn ;  
Gleams, and a thunder of people that cried out,  
And dust and hurrying horsemen ; lo their chief,  
That rode with Ceneus rein by rein, returned.  
What cheer, O herald of my lord the king ?

HERALD

Lady, good cheer and great ; the boar is slain.

CHORUS

Praised be all gods that look toward Calydon.

ALTHÆA

Good news and brief ; but by whose happier hand ?

HERALD

A maiden's and a prophet's and thy son's.

ALTHÆA

Well fare the spear that severed him and life.

HERALD

Thine own, and not an alien, hast thou blest.

ALTHÆA

Twice be thou too for my sake blest and his.

HERALD

At the king's word I rode afoam for thine.

ALTHÆA

Thou sayest he tarrieth till they bring the spoil ?

## HERALD

Hard by the quarry, where they breathe, O queen.

## ALTHÆA

Speak thou their chance ; but some bring flowers and  
crown

These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,  
Fetch sacrifice and slay ; for heaven is good.

## HERALD

Some furlongs northward where the brakes begin  
West of that narrowing range of warrior hills  
Whose brooks have bled with battle when thy son  
Smote Acarnania, there all they made halt,  
And with keen eye took note of spear and hound,  
Royally ranked ; Laertes island-born,  
The young Gerenian Nestor, Panopeus,  
And Cepheus and Ancæus, mightiest thewed,  
Arcadians ; next, and evil-eyed of these,  
Arcadian Atalanta, with twain hounds  
Lengthening the leash, and under nose and brow  
Glittering with lipless tooth and fire-swift eye ;  
But from her white braced shoulder the plumed shafts  
Rang, and the bow shone from her side ; next her  
Meleager, like a sun in spring that strikes  
Branch into leaf and bloom into the world,  
A glory among men meaner ; Iphicles,  
And following him that slew the biform bull  
Pirithous, and divine Eurytion,  
And, bride-bound to the gods, Æacides.  
Then Telamon his brother, and Argive-born  
The seer and sayer of visions and of truth,  
Amphiaraus ; and a four-fold strength,

Thine, even thy mother's and thy sister's sons.  
And recent from the roar of foreign foam  
Jason, and Dryas twin-begot with war,  
A blossom of bright battle, sword and man  
Shining ; and Idas, and the keenest eye  
Of Lynceus, and Admetus twice-espoused,  
And Hippasus and Hyleus, great in heart.  
These having halted bade blow horns, and rode  
Through woods and waste lands cleft by stormy  
streams,

Past yew-trees and the heavy hair of pines,  
And where the dew is thickest under oaks,  
This way and that ; but questing up and down  
They saw no trail nor scented ; and one said,  
Plexippus, Help, or help not, Artemis,  
And we will flay thy boarskin with male hands ;  
But saying, he ceased and said not that he would,  
Seeing where the green ooze of a sun-struck marsh  
Shook with a thousand reeds untunable,  
And in their moist and multitudinous flower  
Slept no soft sleep, with violent visions fed,  
The blind bulk of the immeasurable beast  
And seeing, he shuddered with sharp lust of praise  
Through all his limbs, and launched a double dart.  
And missed ; for much desire divided him,  
Too hot of spirit and feebler than his will,  
That his hand failed, though fervent ; and the shaft,  
Sundering the rushes, in a tamarisk stem  
Shook, and stuck fast ; then all abode save one,  
The Arcadian Atalanta ; from her side  
Sprang her hounds, labouring at the leash, and  
slipped,  
And plashed ear-deep with plunging feet ; but she  
Saying, Speed it as I send it for thy sake,

Goddess, drew bow and loosed ; the sudden string  
Rang, and sprang inward, and the waterish air  
Hissed, and the moist plumes of the songless reeds  
Moved as a wave which the wind moves no more.  
But the boar heaved half out of ooze and slime  
His tense flank trembling round the barbèd wound,  
Hateful ; and fiery with invasive eyes  
And bristling with intolerable hair  
Plunged, and the hounds clung, and green flowers  
and white  
Reddened and broke all round them where they  
came.

And charging with sheer tusk he drove, and smote  
Hyleus ; and sharp death caught his sudden soul,  
And violent sleep shed night upon his eyes.  
Then Peleus, with strong strain of hand and heart,  
Shot ; but the sidelong arrow slid, and slew  
His comrade born and loving countryman,  
Under the left arm smitten, as he no less  
Poised a like arrow ; and bright blood brake afoam,  
And falling, and weighed back by clamorous arms,  
Sharp rang the dead limbs of Eurytion.  
Then one shot happier, the Cadmean seer,  
Amphiaraus ; for his sacred shaft  
Pierced the red circlet of one ravening eye  
Beneath the brute brows of the sanguine boar,  
Now bloodier from one slain ; but he so galled  
Sprang straight, and rearing cried no lesser cry  
Than thunder and the roar of wintering streams  
That mix their own foam with the yellower sea ;  
And as a tower that falls by fire in fight  
With ruin of walls and all its archery,  
And breaks the iron flower of war beneath,  
Crushing charred limbs and molten arms of men ;

So through crushed branches and the reddening  
brake

Clamoured and crashed the fervour of his feet,  
And trampled, springing sideways from the tusk,  
Too tardy a moving mould of heavy strength,  
Ancæus ; and as flakes of weak-winged snow  
Break, all the hard thews of his heaving limbs  
Broke, and rent flesh fell every way, and blood  
Flew, and fierce fragments of no more a man.  
Then all the heroes drew sharp breath, and gazed,  
And smote not ; but Meleager, but thy son,  
Right in the wild way of the coming curse  
Rock-rooted, fair with fierce and fastened lips,  
Clear eyes, and springing muscle and shortening  
limb—

With chin aslant indrawn to a tightening throat,  
Grave, and with gathered sinews, like a god,—  
Aimed on the left side his well-handled spear  
Grasped where the ash was knottiest hewn, and  
smote,

And with no missile wound, the monstrous boar  
Right in the hairiest hollow of his hide  
Under the last rib, sheer through bulk and bone,  
Deep in ; and deeply smitten, and to death,  
The heavy horror with his hanging shafts  
Leapt, and fell furiously, and from raging lips  
Foamed out the latest wrath of all his life.  
And all they praised the gods with mightier heart,  
Zeus and all gods, but chiefiest Artemis,  
Seeing ; but Meleager bade whet knives and flay,  
Strip and stretch out the splendour of the spoil ;  
And hot and horrid from the work all these  
Sat, and drew breath and drank and made great  
cheer



And washed the hard sweat off their calmer brows.  
For much sweet grass grew higher than grew the  
reed,  
And good for slumber, and every holier herb,  
Narcissus, and the low-lying melilote,  
And all of goodliest blade and bloom that springs  
Where, hid by heavier hyacinth, violet buds  
Blossom and burn ; and fire of yellower flowers  
And light of crescent lilies, and such leaves  
As fear the Faun's and know the Dryad's foot ;  
Olive and ivy and poplar dedicate,  
And many a well-spring overwatched of these.  
There now they rest ; but me the king bade bear  
Good tidings to rejoice this town and thee.  
Wherefore be glad, and all ye give much thanks,  
For fallen is all the trouble of Calydon.

## ALTHÆA

Laud ye the gods ; for this they have given is  
good,  
And what shall be they hide until their time.  
Much good and somewhat grievous hast thou said,  
And either well ; but let all sad things be,  
Till all have made before the prosperous gods  
Burnt-offering, and poured out the floral wine.  
Look fair, O gods, and favourable ; for we  
Praise you with no false heart or flattering mouth,  
Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.

## HERALD

Thou hast prayed well ; for whoso fears not these,  
But once being prosperous waxes huge of heart,  
Him shall some new thing unaware destroy.

## CHORUS

O that I now, I too were  
By deep wells and water-floods,  
Streams of ancient hills, and where  
All the wan green places bear  
Blossoms cleaving to the sod,  
Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair,  
Or such darkest ivy-buds  
As divide thy yellow hair,  
Bacchus, and their leaves that nod  
Round thy fawnskin brush the bare  
Snow-soft shoulders of a god ;  
There the year is sweet, and there  
Earth is full of secret springs,  
And the fervent rose-cheeked hours,  
Those that marry dawn and noon,  
There are sunless, there look pale  
In dim leaves and hidden air,  
Pale as grass or latter flowers  
Or the wild vine's wan wet rings  
Full of dew beneath the moon,  
And all day the nightingale  
Sleeps, and all night sings ;  
There in cold remote recesses  
That nor alien eyes assail,  
Feet, nor imminence of wings,  
Nor a wind nor any tune,  
Thou, O queen and holiest,  
Flower the whitest of all things,  
With reluctant lengthening tresses  
And with sudden splendid breast  
Save of maidens un beholden,  
There art wont to enter, there

822  
SW1



Thy divine swift limbs and golden  
 Maiden growth of unbound hair,  
 Bathed in waters white,  
 Shine, and many a maid's by thee  
 In moist woodland or the hilly  
 Flowerless brakes where wells abound  
 Out of all men's sight ;  
 Or in lower pools that see  
 All their marges clothed all round  
 With the innumerable lily,  
 Whence the golden-girdled bee  
 Flits through flowering rush to fret  
 White or duskier violet,  
 Fair as those that in far years  
 With their buds left luminous  
 And their little leaves made wet,  
 From the warmer dew of tears,  
 Mother's tears in extreme need,  
 Hid the limbs of Iamus,  
 Of thy brother's seed ;  
 For his heart was piteous  
 Toward him, even as thine heart now  
 Pitiful toward us ;  
 Thine, O goddess, turning hither  
 A benignant blameless brow ;  
 Seeing enough of evil done  
 And lives withered as leaves wither  
 In the blasting of the sun ;  
 Seeing enough of hunters dead,  
 Ruin enough of all our year,  
 Herds and harvests slain and shed,  
 Herdsmen stricken many an one,  
 Fruits and flocks consumed together,  
 And great length of deadly days.

Yet with reverent lips and fear  
Turn we toward thee, turn and praise  
For this lightening of clear weather  
And prosperities begun.  
For not seldom, when all air  
As bright water without breath  
Shines, and when men fear not, fate  
Without thunder unaware  
Breaks, and brings down death.  
Joy with grief ye great gods give,  
Good with bad, and overbear  
All the pride of us that live,  
All the high estate,  
As ye long since overbore,  
As in old time long before,  
Many a strong man and a great,  
All that were.  
But do thou, sweet, otherwise,  
Having heed of all our prayer,  
Taking note of all our sighs ;  
We beseech thee by thy light,  
By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,  
And the kingdom of the night,  
Be thou favourable and fair ;  
By thine arrows and thy might  
And Orion overthrown ;  
By the maiden thy delight,  
By the indissoluble zone  
And the sacred hair.

## MESSENGER

Maidens, if ye will sing now, shift your song,  
Bow down, cry, wail for pity ; is this a time  
For singing ? nay, for strewing of dust and ash,  
Rent raiment, and for bruising of the breast.

## CHORUS

What new thing wolf-like lurks behind thy words?  
What snake's tongue in thy lips? what fire in the  
eyes?

## MESSENGER

Bring me before the queen and I will speak.

## CHORUS

Lo, she comes forth as from thank-offering made.

## MESSENGER

A barren offering for a bitter gift.

## ALTHÆA

What are these borne on branches, and the face  
Covered? no mean men living, but now slain  
Such honour have they, if any dwell with death.

## MESSENGER

Queen, thy twain brethren and thy mother's sons.

## ALTHÆA

Lay down your dead till I behold their blood  
If it be mine indeed, and I will weep.

## MESSENGER

Weep if thou wilt, for these men shall no more.

## ALTHÆA

O brethren, O my father's sons, of me  
Well loved and well reputed, I should weep  
Tears dearer than the dear blood drawn from you  
But that I know you not uncomforted,  
Sleeping no shameful sleep, however slain,  
For my son surely hath avenged you dead.

MESSENGER

Nay, should thine own seed slay himself, O queen?

ALTHÆA

Thy double word brings forth a double death.

MESSENGER

Know this then singly, by one hand they fell.

ALTHÆA

What mutterest thou with thine ambiguous mouth?

MESSENGER

Slain by thy son's hand ; is that saying so hard?

ALTHÆA

Our time is come upon us : it is here.

CHORUS

O miserable, and spoiled at thine own hand,

ALTHÆA

Wert thou not called Meleager from this womb?

CHORUS

A grievous huntsman hath it bred to thee.

ALTHÆA

Wert thou born fire, and shalt thou not devour?

CHORUS

The fire thou madest, will it consume even thee?

ALTHÆA

My dreams are fallen upon me ; burn thou too.

CHORUS

Not without God are visions born and die.

ALTHÆA

The gods are many about me ; I am one.

CHORUS

She groans as men wrestling with heavier gods.

ALTHÆA

They rend me, they divide me, they destroy.

CHORUS

Or one labouring in travail of strange births.

ALTHÆA

They are strong, they are strong ; I am broken, and  
these prevail.

CHORUS

The god is great against her ; she will die.

ALTHÆA

Yea, but not now ; for my heart too is great.  
I would I were not here in sight of the sun.  
But thou, speak all thou sawest, and I will die.

MESSENGER

O queen, for queenlike hast thou borne thyself,  
A little word may hold so great mischance.  
For in division of the sanguine spoil  
These men thy brethren wrangling bade yield up  
The boar's head and the horror of the hide  
That this might stand a wonder in Calydon,

Hallowed ; and some drew toward them ; but thy son  
With great hands grasping all that weight of hair  
Cast down the dead heap clanging and collapsed  
At female feet, saying This thy spoil not mine,  
Maiden, thine own hand for thyself hath reaped,  
And all this praise God gives thee : she thereat  
Laughed, as when dawn touches the sacred night  
The sky sees laugh and redden and divide  
Dim lips and eyelids virgin of the sun,  
Hers, and the warm slow breasts of morning heave,  
Fruitful, and flushed with flame from lamp-lit hours,  
And maiden undulation of clear hair  
Colour the clouds ; so laughed she from pure heart,  
Lit with a low blush to the braided hair,  
And rose-coloured and cold like very dawn,  
Golden and godlike, chastely with chaste lips,  
A faint grave laugh ; and all they held their peace,  
And she passed by them. Then one cried Lo now,  
Shall not the Arcadian shoot out lips at us,  
Saying all we were despoiled by this one girl ?  
And all they rode against her violently  
And cast the fresh crown from her hair, and now  
They had rent her spoil away, dishonouring her,  
Save that Meleager, as a tame lion chafed,  
Bore on them, broke them, and as fire cleaves wood  
So clove and drove them, smitten in twain ; but she  
Smote not nor heaved up hand ; and this man first,  
Plexippus, crying out This for love's sake, sweet,  
Drove at Meleager, who with spear straightening  
Pierced his cheek through ; then Toxeus made for  
him,  
Dumb, but his spear spake ; vain and violent words.  
Fruitless ; for him too stricken through both sides  
The earth felt falling, and his horse's foam

Blanched thy son's face, his slayer ; and these being  
slain,

None moved nor spake ; but Æneus bade bear hence  
These made of heaven infatuate in their deaths,  
Foolish ; for these would baffle fate, and fell.  
And they passed on, and all men honoured her,  
Being honourable, as one revered of heaven.

## ALTHÆA

What say you, women ? is all this not well done ?

## CHORUS

No man doth well but God hath part in him.

## ALTHÆA

But no part here ; for these my brethren born  
Ye have no part in, these ye know not of  
As I that was their sister, a sacrifice  
Slain in their slaying. I would I had died for these ;  
For this man dead walked with me, child by child,  
And made a weak staff for my feebler feet  
With his own tender wrist and hand, and held  
And led me softly and shewed me gold and steel  
And shining shapes of mirror and bright crown  
And all things fair ; and threw light spears, and  
brought

Young hounds to huddle at my feet and thrust  
Tame heads against my little maiden breasts  
And please me with great eyes ; and those days went  
And these are bitter and I a barren queen  
And sister miserable, a grievous thing  
And mother of many curses ; and she too,  
My sister Leda, sitting overseas  
With fair fruits round her, and her faultless lord,



Shall curse me, saying A sorrow and not a son,  
Sister, thou barest, even a burning fire,  
A brand consuming thine own soul and me.  
But ye now, sons of Thestius, make good cheer,  
For ye shall have such wood to funeral fire  
As no king hath ; and flame that once burnt down  
Oil shall not quicken or breath relume or wine  
Refresh again ; much costlier than fine gold,  
And more than many lives of wandering men.

## CHORUS

O queen, thou hast yet with thee love-worthy things,  
Thine husband, and the great strength of thy son.

## ALTHÆA

Who shall get brothers for me while I live ?  
Who bear them ? who bring forth in lieu of these ?  
Are not our fathers and our brethren one,  
And no man like them ? are not mine here slain ?  
Have we not hung together, he and I,  
Flowerwise feeding as the feeding bees,  
With mother-milk for honey ? and this man too,  
Dead, with my son's spear thrust between his sides,  
Hath he not seen us, later born than he,  
Laugh with lips filled, and laughed again for love ?  
There were no sons then in the world, nor spears,  
Nor deadly births of women ; but the gods  
Allowed us, and our days were clear of these.  
I would I had died unwedded, and brought forth  
No swords to vex the world ; for these that spake  
Sweet words long since and loved me will not speak  
Nor love nor look upon me ; and all my life  
I shall not hear nor see them living men.  
But I too living, how shall I now live ?

What life shall this be with my son, to know  
What hath been and desire what will not be,  
Look for dead eyes and listen for dead lips,  
And kill mine own heart with remembering them,  
And with those eyes that see their slayer alive  
Weep, and wring hands that clasp him by the hand?  
How shall I bear my dreams of them, to hear  
False voices, feel the kisses of false mouths  
And footless sound of perished feet, and then  
Wake and hear only it may be their own hounds  
Whine masterless in miserable sleep,  
And see their boar-spears and their beds and seats  
And all the gear and housings of their lives  
And not the men? shall hounds and horses mourn,  
Pine with strange eyes, and prick up hungry ears,  
Famish and fail at heart for their dear lords,  
And I not heed at all? and those blind things  
Fall off from life for love's sake, and I live?  
Surely some death is better than some life,  
Better one death for him and these and me  
For if the gods had slain them it may be  
I had endured it; if they had fallen by war  
Or by the nets and knives of privy death  
And by hired hands while sleeping, this thing too  
I had set my soul to suffer; or this hunt,  
Had this despatched them, under tusk or tooth  
Torn, sanguine, trodden, broken; for all deaths  
Or honourable or with facile feet avenged  
And hands of swift gods following, all save this,  
Are bearable; but not for their sweet land  
Fighting, but not a sacrifice, lo these  
Dead; for I had not then shed all mine heart  
Out at mine eyes: then either with good speed,  
Being just, I had slain their slayer atoningly,

Or strewn with flowers their fire and on their tombs  
Hung crowns, and over them a song, and seen  
Their praise outflame their ashes : for all men,  
All maidens, had come thither, and from pure lips  
Shed songs upon them, from heroic eyes  
Tears ; and their death had been a deathless life ;  
But now, by no man hired nor alien sword,  
By their own kindred are they fallen, in peace,  
After much peril, friendless among friends,  
By hateful hands they loved ; and how shall mine  
Touch these returning red and not from war,  
These fatal from the vintage of men's veins,  
Dead men my brethren ? how shall these wash off  
No festal stains of undelightful wine,  
How mix the blood, my blood on them, with me,  
Holding mine hand ? or how shall I say, son,  
That am no sister ? but by night and day  
Shall we not sit and hate each other, and think  
Things hate-worthy ? not live with shamefast eyes,  
Brow-beaten, treading soft with fearful feet,  
Each unupbraided, each without rebuke  
Convicted, and without a word reviled  
Each of another ? and I shall let thee live  
And see thee strong and hear men for thy sake  
Praise me, but these thou wouldest not let live  
No man shall praise for ever ? these shall lie  
Dead, unbeloved, unholpen, all through thee ?  
Sweet were they toward me living, and mine heart  
Desired them, but was then well satisfied,  
That now is as men hungered ; and these dead  
I shall want always to the day I die.  
For all things else and all men may renew ;  
Yea, son for son the gods may give and take,  
But never a brother or sister any more.

CHORUS

Nay, for the son lies close about thine heart,  
 Full of thy milk, warm from thy womb, and drains  
 Life and the blood of life and all thy fruit,  
 Eats thee and drinks thee as who breaks bread and  
     eats,  
 Treads wine and drinks, thyself, a sect of thee ;  
 And if he feed not, shall not thy flesh faint ?  
 Or drink not, are not thy lips dead for thirst ?  
 This thing moves more than all things, even thy son,  
 That thou cleave to him ; and he shall honour thee,  
 Thy womb that bare him and the breasts he knew,  
 Reverencing most for thy sake all his gods.

ALTHÆA

But these the gods too gave me, and these my son,  
 Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart  
 Nor the old sweet years nor all venerable things,  
 But cruel, and in his ravin like a beast,  
 Hath taken away to slay them : yea, and she  
 She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,  
 Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,  
 Adorable, detestable—even she  
 Saw with strange eyes and with strange lips rejoiced,  
 Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and me  
 Made miserable above all miseries made,  
 A grief among all women in the world,  
 A name to be washed out with all men's tears.

CHORUS

Strengthen thy spirit ; is this not also a god,  
 Chance, and the wheel of all necessities ?  
 Hard things have fallen upon us from harsh gods,  
 Whom lest worse hap rebuke we not for these.

## ALTHÆA

My spirit is strong against itself, and I  
For these things' sake cry out on mine own soul  
That it endures outrage, and dolorous days,  
And life, and this inexpiable impotence.  
Weak am I, weak and shameful ; my breath drawn  
Shames me, and monstrous things and violent gods.  
What shall atone ? what heal me ? what bring back  
Strength to the foot, light to the face ? what herb  
Assuage me ? what restore me ? what release ?  
What strange thing eaten or drunken, O great gods,  
Make me as you or as the beasts that feed,  
Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts ?  
For these ye show us ; and we less than these  
Have not wherewith to live as all these things  
Which all their lives fare after their own kind  
As who doth well rejoicing ; but we ill,  
Weeping or laughing, we whom eyesight fails,  
Knowledge and light of face and perfect heart,  
And hands we lack, and wit ; and all our days  
Sin, and have hunger, and die infatuated.  
For madness have ye given us and not health,  
And sins whereof we know not ; and for these  
Death, and sudden destruction unaware.  
What shall we say now ? what thing comes of us ?

## CHORUS

Alas, for all this all men undergo.

## ALTHÆA

Wherefore I will not that these twain, O gods,  
Die as a dog dies, eaten of creeping things,  
Abominable, a loathing ; but though dead  
Shall they have honour and such funereal flame

As strews men's ashes in their enemies' face  
And blinds their eyes who hate them : lest men say,  
" Lo how they lie, and living had great kin,  
And none of these hath pity of them, and none  
Regards them lying, and none is wrung at heart,  
None moved in spirit for them, naked and slain,  
Abhorred, abased, and no tears comfort them : "  
And in the dark this grieve Eurythemis,  
Hearing how these her sons come down to her  
Unburied, unavenger'd, as kinless men,  
And had a queen their sister. That were shame  
Worse than this grief. Yet how to atone at all  
I know not ; seeing the love of my born son,  
A new-made mother's new-born love, that grows  
From the soft child to the strong man, now soft  
Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,  
Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal ;  
This love is deep, and natural to man's blood,  
And ineffaceable with many tears.  
Yet shall not these rebuke me though I die,  
Nor she in that waste world with all her dead,  
My mother, among the pale flocks fallen as leaves,  
Folds of dead people, and alien from the sun ;  
Nor lack some bitter comfort, some poor praise,  
Being queen, to have borne her daughter like a queen.  
Righteous ; and though mine own fire burn me too,  
She shall have honour and these her sons, though dead.  
But all the gods will, all they do, and we  
Not all we would, yet somewhat ; and one choice  
We have, to live and do just deeds and die.

## CHORUS

Terrible words she communes with, and turns  
Swift fiery eyes in doubt against herself,  
And murmurs as who talks in dreams with death.



## ALTHÆA

For the unjust also dieth, and him all men  
Hate, and himself abhors the unrighteousness,  
And seeth his own dishonour intolerable.  
But I being just, doing right upon myself,  
Slay mine own soul, and no man born shames me.  
For none constrains nor shall rebuke, being done,  
What none compelled me doing ; thus these things  
fare.

Ah, ah, that such things should so fare ; ah me,  
That I am found to do them and endure,  
Chosen and constrained to choose, and bear myself  
Mine own wound through mine own flesh to the heart  
Violently stricken, a spoiler and a spoil,  
A ruin ruinous, fallen on mine own son.  
Ah, ah, for me too as for these ; alas,  
For that is done that shall be, and mine hand  
Full of the deed, and full of blood mine eyes,  
That shall see never nor touch anything  
Save blood unstanch'd and fire unquenchable.

## CHORUS

What wilt thou do ? what ails thee ? for the house  
Shakes ruinously ; wilt thou bring fire for it ?

## ALTHÆA

Fire in the roofs, and on the lintels fire.  
Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,  
There ; and blood drips from hand and thread, and  
stains  
Threshold and raiment and me passing in  
Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death.



CHORUS

Alas that time is stronger than strong men,  
Fate than all gods : and these are fallen on us.

ALTHÆA

A little since and I was glad ; and now  
I never shall be glad or sad again.

CHORUS

Between two joys a grief grows unaware.

ALTHÆA

A little while and I shall laugh ; and then  
I shall weep never and laugh not any more.

CHORUS

What shall be said ? for words are thorns to grief.  
Withhold thyself a little and fear the gods.

ALTHÆA

Fear died when these were slain ; and I am as dead,  
And fear is of the living ; these fear none.

CHORUS

Have pity upon all people for their sake.

ALTHÆA

It is done now ; shall I put back my day ?

CHORUS

An end is come, an end ; this is of God.

ALTHÆA

I am fire, and burn myself ; keep clear of fire.

## CHORUS

The house is broken, is broken ; it shall not stand.

## ALTHÆA

Woe, woe for him that breaketh ; and a rod  
Smote it of old, and now the axe is here.

## CHORUS

Not as with sundering of the earth  
Nor as with cleaving of the sea  
Nor fierce foreshadowings of a birth  
Nor flying dreams of death to be  
Nor loosening of the large world's girth  
And quickening of the body of night,  
And sound of thunder in men's ears  
And fire of lightning in men's sight,  
Fate, mother of desires and fears,  
Bore unto men the law of tears ;  
But sudden, an unfathered flame,  
And broken out of night, she shone,  
She, without body, without name,  
In days forgotten and foregone ;  
And heaven rang round her as she came  
Like smitten cymbals, and lay bare ;  
Clouds and great stars, thunders and snows,  
The blue sad fields and folds of air,  
The life that breathes, the life that grows,  
All wind, all fire, that burns or blows,  
Even all these knew her : for she is great ;  
The daughter of doom, the mother of death,  
The sister of sorrow ; a lifelong weight  
That no man's finger lighteneth,  
Nor any god can lighten fate ;

A landmark seen across the way  
Where one race treads as the other trod ;  
An evil sceptre, an evil stay,  
Wrought for a staff, wrought for a rod,  
The bitter jealousy of God.

For death is deep as the sea,  
And fate as the waves thereof.  
Shall the waves take pity on thee  
Or the southwind offer thee love ?  
Wilt thou take the night for thy day  
Or the darkness for light on thy way,  
Till thou say in thine heart Enough ?  
Behold, thou art over fair, thou art over wise ;  
The sweetness of spring in thine hair, and the light  
in thine eyes.  
The light of the spring in thine eyes, and the sound  
in thine ears ;  
Yet thine heart shall wax heavy with sighs and thine  
eyelids with tears.  
Wilt thou cover thine hair with gold, and with silver  
thy feet ?  
Hast thou taken the purple to fold thee, and made  
thy mouth sweet ?  
Behold, when thy face is made bare, he that loved  
thee shall hate ;  
Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.  
For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain ,  
And the veil of thine head shall be grief ; and the  
crown shall be pain.

## ALTHÆA

Ho, ye that wail, and ye that sing, make way  
Till I be come among you. Hide your tears,

Ye little weepers, and your laughing lips,  
Ye laughers for a little ; lo mine eyes  
That outweep heaven at rainiest, and my mouth  
That laughs as gods laugh at us. Fate's are we,  
Yet fate is ours a breathing-space ; yea, mine,  
Fate is made mine for ever ; he is my son,  
My bedfellow, my brother. You strong gods,  
Give place unto me ; I am as any of you,  
To give life and to take life. Thou, old earth,  
That hast made man and unmade ; thou whose mouth  
Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb ;  
Behold me with what lips upon what food  
I feed and fill my body ; even with flesh  
Made of my body. Lo, the fire I lit  
I burn with fire to quench it ; yea, with flame  
I burn up even the dust and ash thereof.

## CHORUS

Woman, what fire is this thou burnest with ?

## ALTHÆA

Yea to the bone, yea to the blood and all.

## CHORUS

For this thy face and hair are as one fire.

## ALTHÆA

A tongue that licks and beats upon the dust.

## CHORUS

And in thine eyes are hollow light and heat.

## ALTHÆA

Of flame not fed with hand or frankincense.

CHORUS

I fear thee for the trembling of thine eyes,

ALTHÆA

Neither with love they tremble nor for fear.

CHORUS

And thy mouth shuddering like a shot bird.

ALTHÆA

Not as the bride's mouth when man kisses it.

CHORUS

Nay, but what thing is this thing thou hast done?

ALTHÆA

Look, I am silent, speak your eyes for me.

CHORUS

I see a faint fire lightening from the hail.

ALTHÆA

Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids drop off.

CHORUS

Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.

ALTHÆA

Stretch with your necks like birds : cry, chirp as  
they.

CHORUS

And a long brand that blackens : and white dust.

## ALTHÆA

O children, what is this ye see? your eyes  
Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon.  
That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,  
My travail, and the year's weight of my womb,  
Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands  
And of mine hands extinguished; this is he.

## CHORUS

O gods, what word has flown out at thy mouth?

## ALTHÆA

I did this and I say this and I die.

## CHORUS

Death stands upon the doorway of thy lips,  
And in thy mouth has death set up his house.

## ALTHÆA

O death, a little, a little while, sweet death,  
Until I see the brand burnt down and die.

## CHORUS

She reels as any reed under the wind,  
And cleaves unto the ground with staggering feet.

## ALTHÆA

Girls, one thing will I say and hold my peace.  
I that did this will weep not nor cry out,  
Cry ye and weep: I will not call on gods,  
Call ye on them; I will not pity man,  
Shew ye your pity. I know not if I live;  
Save that I feel the fire upon my face  
And on my cheek the burning of a brand.

Yea the smoke bites me, yea I drink the steam  
With nostril and with eyelid and with lip  
Insatiate and intolerant ; and mine hands  
Burn, and fire feeds upon mine eyes ; I reel  
As one made drunk with living, whence he draws  
Drunken delight ; yet I, though mad for joy,  
Loathe my long living and am waxen red  
As with the shadow of shed blood ; behold,  
I am kindled with the flames that fade in him,  
I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,  
I am flooded with his ebbing ; my lit eyes  
Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids  
Bloodless ; my cheek is luminous with blood  
Because his face is ashen. Yet, O child,  
Son, first-born, fairest—O sweet mouth, sweet eyes,  
That drew my life out through my suckling breast,  
That shone and clove mine heart through—O soft  
knees

Clinging, O tender treadings of soft feet,  
Cheeks warm with little kissings—O child, child,  
What have we made each other ? Lo, I felt  
Thy weight cleave to me, a burden of beauty, O son,  
Thy cradled brows and loveliest loving lips,  
The floral hair, the little lightening eyes,  
And all thy goodly glory ; with mine hands  
Delicately I fed thee, with my tongue  
Tenderly spake, saying, Verily in God's time,  
For all the little likeness of thy limbs,  
Son, I shall make thee a kingly man to fight,  
A lordly leader ; and hear before I die,  
“ She bore the goodliest sword of all the world.”  
Oh ! oh ! For all my life turns round on me ;  
I am severed from myself, my name is gone,  
My name that was a healing, it is changed,



My name is a consuming. From this time,  
Though mine eyes reach to the end of all these things,  
My lips shall not unfasten till I die.

## SEMICHORUS

She has filled with sighing the city,  
And the ways thereof with tears ;  
She arose, she girdled her sides,  
She set her face as a bride's ;  
She wept, and she had no pity ;  
Trembled, and felt no fears.

## SEMICHORUS

Her eyes were clear as the sun,  
Her brows were fresh as the day ;  
She girdled herself with gold,  
Her robes were manifold ;  
But the days of her worship are done,  
Her praise is taken away.

## SEMICHORUS

For she set her hand to the fire,  
With her mouth she kindled the same ;  
As the mouth of a flute-player,  
So was the mouth of her ;  
With the might of her strong desire  
She blew the breath of the flame.

## SEMICHORUS

She set her hand to the wood,  
She took the fire in her hand ;  
As one who is nigh to death,  
She panted with strange breath ;  
She opened her lips unto blood,  
She breathed and kindled the brand.

SEMICHORUS

As a wood-dove newly shot,  
 She sobbed and lifted her breast ;  
 She sighed and covered her eyes,  
 Filling her lips with sighs ;  
 She sighed, she withdrew herself not,  
 She refrained not, taking not rest ;

SEMICHORUS

But as the wind which is drouth,  
 And as the air which is death,  
 As storm that severeth ships,  
 Her breath severing her lips,  
 The breath came forth of her mouth  
 And the fire came forth of her breath.

SECOND MESSENGER

Queen, and you maidens, there is come on us  
 A thing more deadly than the face of death ;  
 Meleager the good lord is as one slain.

SEMICHORUS

Without sword, without sword is he stricken ;  
 Slain, and slain without hand.

SECOND MESSENGER

For as keen ice divided of the sun  
 His limbs divide, and as thawed snow the flesh  
 Thaws from off all his body to the hair.

SEMICHORUS

He wastes as the embers quicken ;  
 With the brand he fades as a brand.

## SECOND MESSENGER

Even while they sang and all drew hither and he  
Lifted both hands to crown the Arcadian's hair  
And fix the looser leaves, both hands fell down.

## SEMICHORUS

With rending of cheek and of hair  
Lament ye, mourn for him, weep.

## SECOND MESSENGER

Straightway the crown slid off and smote on earth,  
First fallen ; and he, grasping his own hair, groaned  
And cast his raiment round his face and fell.

## SEMICHORUS

Alas for visions that were,  
And soothsayings spoken in sleep.

## SECOND MESSENGER

But the king twitched his reins in and leapt down  
And caught him, crying out twice " O child " and  
thrice,  
So that men's eyelids thickened with their tears.

## SEMICHORUS

Lament with a long lamentation,  
Cry, for an end is at hand.

## SECOND MESSENGER

O son, he said, son, lift thine eyes, draw breath,  
Pity me ; but Meleager with sharp lips  
Gasped, and his face waxed like as sunburnt grass.

## SEMICHORUS

Cry aloud, O thou kingdom, O nation,  
O stricken, a ruinous land.

## SECOND MESSENGER

Whereat king Æneus, straightening feeble knees,  
With feeble hands heaved up a lessening weight,  
And laid him sadly in strange hands, and wept.

## SEMICHORUS

Thou art smitten, her lord, her desire,  
Thy dear blood wasted as rain.

## SECOND MESSENGER

And they with tears and rendings of the beard  
Bear hither a breathing body, wept upon  
And lightening at each footfall, sick to death.

## SEMICHORUS

Thou madest thy sword as a fire,  
With fire for a sword thou art slain.

## SECOND MESSENGER

And lo, the feast turned funeral, and the crowns  
Fallen; and the huntress and the hunter trapped;  
And weeping and changed faces and veiled hair.

## MELEAGER

Let your hands meet  
Round the weight of my head;  
Lift ye my feet  
As the feet of the dead;  
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it  
molten as lead.

## CHORUS

O thy luminous face,  
Thine imperious eyes !  
O the grief, O the grace,  
As of day when it dies !

Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and  
suppression of sighs ?

## MELEAGER

Is a bride so fair ?  
Is a maid so meek ?  
With unchapleted hair,  
With unfilleted cheek,

Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as  
blessing to speak.

## ATALANTA

I would that with feet  
Unsandalled, unshod,  
Overbold, overfleet,  
I had swum not nor trod

From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the  
envy of God.

## MELEAGER

Unto each man his fate ;  
Unto each as he saith  
In whose fingers the weight  
Of the world is as breath ;

Yet I would that in clamour or battle mine hands had  
laid hold upon death.

## CHORUS

Not with cleaving of shields  
And their clash in thine ear,  
When the lord of fought fields  
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,  
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with  
travail and labour and fear.

## MELEAGER

Would God he had found me  
Beneath fresh boughs !  
Would God he had bound me  
Unawares in mine house,  
With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a  
crown on my brows !

## CHORUS

Whence art thou sent from us ?  
Whither thy goal ?  
How art thou rent from us,  
Thou that wert whole,  
As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sunder-  
ing of body and soul !

## MELEAGER

My heart is within me  
As an ash in the fire ;  
Whosoever hath seen me,  
Without lute, without lyre,  
Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that  
were ill to desire.

## CHORUS

Who shall raise thee  
From the house of the dead?  
Or what man praise thee  
That thy praise may be said?  
Alas thy beauty! alas thy body! alas thine head!

## MELEAGER

But thou, O mother,  
The dreamer of dreams,  
Wilt thou bring forth another  
To feel the sun's beams  
When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail  
by impassable streams?

## CENEUS

What thing wilt thou leave me  
Now this thing is done?  
A man wilt thou give me,  
A son for my son,  
For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the  
desirable one?

## CHORUS

Thou wert glad above others,  
Yea, fair beyond word;  
Thou wert glad among mothers;  
For each man that heard  
Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings  
to the feet of a bird.



## CENEUS

Who shall give back  
Thy face of old years,  
With travail made black,  
Grown grey among fears,  
Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of  
tears?

## MELEAGER

Though thou art as fire  
Fed with fuel in vain,  
My delight, my desire,  
Is more chaste than the rain,  
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are  
that live without stain.

## ATALANTA

I would that as water  
My life's blood had thawed,  
Or as winter's wan daughter  
Leaves lowland and lawn  
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee  
made dark in thy dawn.

## CHORUS

When thou dravest the men  
Of the chosen of Thrace,  
None turned him again  
Nor endured he thy face  
Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light  
from a terrible place.

## CENEUS

Thou shouldst die as he dies  
For whom none sheddeth tears ;  
Filling thine eyes  
And fulfilling thine ears  
With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the  
beauty, the splendour of spears.

## CHORUS

In the ears of the world  
It is sung, it is told,  
And the light thereof hurled  
And the noise thereof rolled  
From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the  
fleece of gold.

## MELEAGER

Would God ye could carry me  
Forth of all these ;  
Heap sand and bury me  
By the Chersonese  
Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the  
thunder of Pontic seas.

## CENEUS

Dost thou mock at our praise  
And the singing begun  
And the men of strange days  
Praising my son  
In the folds of the hills of home, high places of  
Calydon ?

## MELEAGER

For the dead man no home is ;  
Ah, better to be  
What the flower of the foam is  
In fields of the sea,  
That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the  
gulf-stream a garment for me.

## CHORUS

Who shall seek thee and bring  
And restore thee thy day,  
When the dove dipt her wing  
And the oars won their way  
Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the  
straits of Propontis with spray?

## MELEAGER

Will ye crown me my tomb  
Or exalt me my name,  
Now my spirits consume,  
Now my flesh is a flame?  
Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleep-  
ing to praise me or shame.

## CHORUS

Turn back now, turn thee,  
As who turns him to wake ;  
Though the life in thee burn thee,  
Couldst thou bathe it and slake  
Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east  
upon west waters break?

## MELEAGER

Would the winds blow me back  
Or the waves hurl me home ?  
Ah, to touch in the track  
Where the pine learnt to roam  
Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool  
blossoms of water and foam !

## CHORUS

The gods may release  
That they made fast ;  
Thy soul shall have ease  
In thy limbs at the last ;  
But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that  
is overpast ?

## MELEAGER

Not the life of men's veins,  
Not of flesh that conceives ;  
But the grace that remains,  
The fair beauty that cleaves  
To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the  
dews on the leaves.

## CHORUS

Thou wert helmsman and chief ;  
Wilt thou turn in an hour,  
Thy limbs to the leaf,  
Thy face to the flower,  
Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who  
divide and devour ?

MELEAGER

The years are hungry,  
 They wail all their days ;  
 The gods wax angry  
 And weary of praise ;  
 And who shall bridle their lips ? and who shall straiten  
 their ways ?

CHORUS

The gods guard over us  
 With sword and with rod ;  
 Weaving shadow to cover us,  
 Heaping the sod,  
 That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's  
 face before God.

MELEAGER

O holy head of Ceneus, lo thy son  
 Guiltless, yet red from alien guilt, yet foul  
 With kinship of contaminated lives,  
 Lo, for their blood I die ; and mine own blood  
 For bloodshedding of mine is mixed therewith,  
 That death may not discern me from my kin.  
 Yet with clean heart I die and faultless hand,  
 Not shamefully ; thou therefore of thy love  
 Salute me, and bid fare among the dead  
 Well, as the dead fare ; for the best man dead  
 Fares sadly ; nathless I now faring well  
 Pass without fear where nothing is to fear  
 Having thy love about me and thy goodwill,  
 O father, among dark places and men dead.

## CENEUS

Child, I salute thee with sad heart and tears,  
And bid thee comfort, being a perfect man  
In fight, and honourable in the house of peace.  
The gods give thee fair wage and dues of death,  
And me brief days and ways to come at thee.

## MELEAGER

Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,  
And full of ease and kingdom ; seeing in death  
There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,  
Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn  
Nor light upon the land whither I go.  
Live thou and take thy fill of days and die  
When thy day comes ; and make not much of death  
Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing.  
Thou too, the bitter mother and mother-plague  
Of this my weary body—thou too, queen,  
'The source and end, the sower and the scythe,  
The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,  
The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,  
'To make me and unmake me—thou, I say,  
Althæa, since my father's ploughshare, drawn  
Through fatal seedland of a female field,  
Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear  
Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains  
I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,  
Mother, I dying with unforgetful tongue  
Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just  
Who art unjust and unholy ; and with my knees  
Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,  
Dissundering them, devour me ; for these limbs  
Are as light dust and crumbings from mine urn

Before the fire has touched them ; and my face  
As a dead leaf or dead foot's mark on snow,  
And all this body a broken barren tree  
That was so strong, and all this flower of life  
Disbranched and desecrated miserably,  
And minished all that god-like muscle and might  
And lesser than a man's : for all my veins  
Fail me, and all mine ashen life burns down.  
I would thou hadst let me live ; but gods averse,  
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,  
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,  
These and not thou ; me too thou hast loved, and I  
Thee ; but this death was mixed with all my life,  
Mine end with my beginning : and this law,  
This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.  
And let no brother or sister grieve too sore,  
Nor melt their hearts out on me with their tears,  
Since extreme love and sorrowing overmuch  
Vex the great gods, and overloving men  
Slay and are slain for love's sake ; and this house  
Shall bear much better children ; why should these  
Weep ? but in patience let them live their lives  
And mine pass by forgotten : thou alone,  
Mother, thou sole and only, thou not these,  
Keep me in mind a little when I die  
Because I was thy first-born ; let thy soul  
Pity me, pity even me gone hence and dead,  
Though thou wert wroth, and though thou bear again  
Much happier sons, and all men later born  
Exceedingly excel me ; yet do thou  
Forget not, nor think shame ; I was thy son.  
Time was I did not shame thee ; and time was  
I thought to live and make thee honourable  
With deeds as great as these men's ; but they live,



These, and I die ; and what thing should have been  
Surely I know not ; yet I charge thee, seeing  
I am dead already, love me not the less,  
Me, O my mother ; I charge thee by these gods,  
My father's, and that holier breast of thine,  
By these that see me dying, and that which nursed,  
Love me not less, thy first-born : though grief come,  
Grief only, of me, and of all these great joy,  
And shall come always to thee ; for thou knowest,  
O mother, O breasts that bare me, for ye know,  
O sweet head of my mother, sacred eyes,  
Ye know my soul albeit I sinned, ye know  
Albeit I kneel not neither touch thy knees,  
But with my lips I kneel, and with my heart  
I fall about thy feet and worship thee.  
And ye farewell now, all my friends ; and ye,  
Kinsmen, much younger and glorious more than I,  
Sons of my mother's sister ; and all farewell  
That were in Colchis with me, and bare down  
The waves and wars that met us : and though times  
Change, and though now I be not anything,  
Forget not me among you, what I did  
In my good time ; for even by all those days,  
Those days and this, and your own living souls,  
And by the light and luck of you that live,  
And by this miserable spoil, and me  
Dying, I beseech you, let my name not die.  
But thou, dear, touch me with thy rose-like hands.  
And fasten up mine eyelids with thy mouth,  
A bitter kiss ; and grasp me with thine arms,  
Printing with heavy lips my light waste flesh,  
Made light and thin by heavy-handed fate,  
And with thine holy maiden eyes drop dew,  
Drop tears for dew upon me who am dead,

Me who have loved thee ; seeing without sin done  
I am gone down to the empty weary house  
Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes  
Nor sound of mouth nor might of hands and feet.  
But thou, dear, hide my body with thy veil,  
And with thy raiment cover foot and head,  
And stretch thyself upon me and touch hands  
With hands and lips with lips : be pitiful  
As thou art maiden perfect ; let no man  
Defile me to despise me, saying, This man  
Died woman-wise, a woman's offering, slain  
Through female fingers in his woof of life,  
Dishonourable ; for thou hast honoured me.  
And now for God's sake kiss me once and twice  
And let me go ; for the night gathers me,  
And in the night shall no man gather fruit

## ATALANTA

Hail thou : but I with heavy face and feet  
Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes.

## CHORUS

Who shall contend with his lords  
Or cross them or do them wrong ?  
Who shall bind them as with cords ?  
Who shall tame them as with song ?  
Who shall smite them as with swords ?  
For the hands of their kingdom are strong.



# ERECHTHEUS

## A TRAGEDY

ὦ τὰ Λικυαῖ καὶ Ἰοστέφανοι καὶ Λαϊῖμοι,  
Ἑλλάδος ἔρεισμα, κλειναὶ Ἀθᾶναι, δαιμόνιον πολίεθρον.

PIND. *Fr.* 47.

ΑΤ. τίς δὲ ποιάνωρ ἔπεστι κἀπιδεσπόζει στρατοῦ;

ΧΟ. οὔτινος δούλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὔδ' ὑπηκόοι.

ÆSCH. *Pers.* 241-2.



TO  
MY MOTHER

## PERSONS

ERECHTHEUS.

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN ELDERS.

PRAXITHEA.

CHTHONIA.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

MESSENGER.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

ATHENA.



## ERECHTHEUS

### ERECHTHEUS

MOTHER of life and death and all men's days,  
Earth, whom I chief of all men born would bless,  
And call thee with more loving lips than theirs  
Mother, for of this very body of thine  
And living blood I have my breath and live,  
Behold me, even thy son, me crowned of men,  
Me made thy child by that strong cunning God  
Who fashions fire and iron, who begat  
Me for a sword and beacon-fire on thee,  
Me fosterling of Pallas, in her shade  
Reared, that I first might pay the nursing debt,  
Hallowing her fame with flower of third-year feasts,  
And first bow down the bridled strength of steeds  
To lose the wild wont of their birth, and bear  
Clasp of man's knees and steerage of his hand,  
Or fourfold service of his fire-swift wheels  
That whirl the four-yoked chariot ; me the king  
Who stand before thee naked now, and cry,  
O holy and general mother of all men born,  
But mother most and motherliest of mine,  
Earth, for I ask thee rather of all the Gods,  
What have we done ? what word mistimed or work  
Hath winged the wild feet of this timeless curse  
To fall as fire upon us ? Lo, I stand

Here on this brow's crown of the city's head  
That crowns its lovely body, till death's hour  
Waste it ; but now the dew of dawn and birth  
Is fresh upon it from thy womb, and we  
Behold it born how beauteous ; one day more  
I see the world's wheel of the circling sun  
Roll up rejoicing to regard on earth  
This one thing goodliest, fair as heaven or he,  
Worth a God's gaze or strife of Gods ; but now  
Would this day's ebb of their spent wave of strife  
Sweep it to sea, wash it on wreck, and leave  
A costless thing contemned ; and in our stead,  
Where these walls were and sounding streets of men,  
Make wide a waste for tongueless water-herds  
And spoil of ravening fishes ; that no more  
Should men say, Here was Athens. This shalt thou  
Sustain not, nor thy son endure to see,  
Nor thou to live and look on ; for the womb  
Bare me not base that bare me miserable,  
To hear this loud brood of the Thracian foam  
Break its broad strength of billowy-beating war  
Here, and upon it as a blast of death  
Blowing, the keen wrath of a fire-souled king,  
A strange growth grafted on our natural soil,  
A root of Thrace in Eleusinian earth  
Set for no comfort to the kindly land,  
Son of the sea's lord and our first-born foe,  
Eumolpus ; nothing sweet in ears of thine  
The music of his making, nor a song  
Toward hopes of ours auspicious ; for the note  
Rings as for death oracular to thy sons  
That goes before him on the sea-wind blown  
Full of this charge laid on me, to put out  
The brief light kindled of mine own child's life,

Or with this helmsman hand that steers the state  
Run right on the under shoal and ridge of death  
The populous ship with all its fraughtage gone  
And sails that were to take the wind of time  
Rent, and the tackling that should hold out fast  
In confluent surge of loud calamities  
Broken, with spars of rudders and lost oars  
That were to row toward harbour and find rest  
In some most glorious haven of all the world  
And else may never near it : such a song  
The Gods have set his lips on fire withal  
Who threatens now in all their names to bring  
Ruin ; but none of these, thou knowest, have I  
Chid with my tongue or cursed at heart for grief,  
Knowing how the soul runs reinless on sheer death  
Whose grief or joy takes part against the Gods.  
And what they will is more than our desire,  
And their desire is more than what we will.  
For no man's will and no desire of man's  
Shall stand as doth a God's will. Yet, O fair  
Mother, that seest me how I cast no word  
Against them, plead no reason, crave no cause,  
Boast me not blameless, nor bewEEP me wronged,  
By this fair wreath of towers we have decked thee  
with,

This chaplet that we give thee woven of walls,  
This girdle of gate and temple and citadel  
Drawn round beneath thy bosom, and fast linked  
As to thine heart's root—this dear crown of thine.  
This present light, this city—be not thou  
Slow to take heed nor slack to strengthen her,  
Fare we so short-lived howsoe'er, and pay  
What price we may to ransom thee thy town,  
Not me my life ; but thou that diest not, thou,

Though all our house die for this people's sake,  
Keep thou for ours thy crown our city, guard  
And give it life the lovelier that we died.

## CHORUS.

Sun, that hast lightened and loosed by thy might  
Ocean and Earth from the lordship of night,  
Quickening with vision his eye that was veiled,  
Freshening the force in her heart that had failed,  
That sister fettered and blinded brother  
Should have sight by thy grace and delight of each  
other,

Behold now and see

What profit is given them of thee ;

What wrath has enkindled with madness of mind  
Her limbs that were bounden, his face that was blind,  
To be locked as in wrestle together, and lighten  
With fire that shall darken thy fire in the sky,  
Body to body and eye against eye

In a war against kind,

Till the bloom of her fields and her high hills whiten  
With the foam of his waves more high.

For the sea-marks set to divide of old

The kingdoms to Ocean and Earth assigned,

The hoar sea-fields from the cornfields' gold,

His wine-bright waves from her vineyards' fold,

Frail forces we find

To bridle the spirit of Gods or bind

Till the heat of their hearts wax cold.

But the peace that was stablished between them to  
stand

Is rent now in twain by the strength of his hand

Who stirs up the storm of his sons overbold

To pluck from fight what he lost of right,

By council and judgment of Gods that spake  
And gave great Pallas the strife's fair stake,  
The lordship and love of the lovely land,  
The grace of the town that hath on it for crown  
But a headband to wear

Of violets one-hued with her hair :  
For the vales and the green high places of earth  
Hold nothing so fair,

And the depths of the sea bear no such birth  
Of the manifold births they bear.

Too well, too well was the great stake worth  
A strife divine for the Gods to judge,  
A crowned God's triumph, a foiled God's grudge,  
Though the loser be strong and the victress wise  
Who played long since for so large a prize,  
The fruitful immortal anointed adored  
Dear city of men without master or lord,  
Fair fortress and fostress of sons born free,  
Who stand in her sight and in thine, O sun,  
Slaves of no man, subjects of none ;  
A wonder enthroned on the hills and sea,  
A maiden crowned with a fourfold glory  
That none from the pride of her head may rend,  
Violet and olive-leaf purple and hoary,  
Song-wreath and story the fairest of fame,  
Flowers that the winter can blast not or bend ;  
A light upon earth as the sun's own flame,  
A name as his name,  
Athens, a praise without end.

A noise is arisen against us of waters, [Str. 1.

A sound as of battle come up from the sea.  
Strange hunters are hard on us, hearts without pity;  
They have staked their nets round the fair young city,

That the sons of her strength and her virgin  
daughters

Should find not whither alive to flee.

And we know not yet of the word unwritten, [*Ant. 1.*

The doom of the Pythian we have not heard ;  
From the navel of earth and the veiled mid altar  
We wait for a token with hopes that falter,  
With fears that hang on our hearts thought-smitten  
Lest her tongue be kindled with no good word.

O thou not born of the womb, nor bred [*Str. 2.*

In the bride-night's warmth of a changed God's bed,  
But thy life as a lightning was flashed from the light  
of thy father's head,

O chief God's child by a motherless birth,  
If aught in thy sight we indeed be worth,  
Keep death from us thou, that art none of the Gods  
of the dead under earth.

Thou that hast power on us, save, if thou wilt ; [*Ant. 2.*

Let the blind wave breach not thy wall scarce  
built ;

But bless us not so as by bloodshed, impute not for  
grace to us guilt,

Nor by price of pollution of blood set us free ;

Let the hands be taintless that clasp thy knee,  
Nor a maiden be slain to redeem for a maiden her  
shrine from the sea.

O earth, O sun, turn back [*Str. 3.*

Full on his deadly track

Death, that would smite you black and mar your  
creatures,

And with one hand disroot

All tender flower and fruit,

With one strike blind and mute the heaven's fair  
features,



Pluck out the eyes of morn, and make  
Silence in the east and blackness whence the bright  
songs break.

Help, earth, help, heaven, that hear [Ant. 3.

The song-notes of our fear,  
Shrewd notes and shrill, not clear or joyful-sounding ;  
Hear, highest of Gods, and stay  
Death on his hunter's way,  
Full on his forceless prey his beagles hounding ;  
Break thou his bow, make short his hand,  
Maim his fleet foot whose passage kills the living  
land.

Let a third wave smite not us, father, [Str. 4.

Long since sore smitten of twain,  
Lest the house of thy son's son perish  
And his name be barren on earth.

Whose race wilt thou comfort rather  
If none to thy son remain ?

Whose seed wilt thou choose to cherish  
If his be cut off in the birth ?

For the first fair graft of his grafting [Ant. 4.

Was rent from its maiden root  
By the strong swift hand of a lover  
Who fills the night with his breath ;

On the lip of the stream low-laughing

Her green soft virginal shoot

Was plucked from the stream-side cover

By the grasp of a love like death.

For a God's was the mouth that kissed her [Str. 5.

Who speaks, and the leaves lie dead,

When winter awakes as at warning

To the sound of his foot from Thrace.

Nor happier the bed of her sister

Though Love's self laid her abed



By a bridegroom beloved of the morning  
 And fair as the dawn's own face.  
 For Procris, ensnared and ensnaring [Ant. 5.  
 By the fraud of a twofold wile,  
 With the point of her own spear stricken  
 By the gift of her own hand fell.  
 Oversubtle in doubts, overdaring  
 In deeds and devices of guile,  
 And strong to quench as to quicken,  
 O Love, have we named thee well?  
 By thee was the spear's edge whetted [Str. 6.  
 That laid her dead in the dew,  
 In the moist green glens of the midland  
 By her dear lord slain and thee.  
 And him at the cliff's end fretted  
 By the grey keen waves, him too,  
 Thine hand from the white-browed headland  
 Flung down for a spoil to the sea.  
 But enough now of griefs grey-growing [Ant. 6.  
 Have darkened the house divine,  
 Have flowered on its boughs and faded,  
 And green is the brave stock yet.  
 O father all seeing and all knowing,  
 Let the last fruit fall not of thine  
 From the tree with whose boughs we are  
 shaded,  
 From the stock that thy son's hand set.

## ERECHTHEUS

O daughter of Cephisus, from all time  
 Wise have I found thee, wife and queen, of heart  
 Perfect ; nor in the days that knew not wind  
 Nor days when storm blew death upon our peace

Was thine heart swoln with seed of pride, or bowed  
With blasts of bitter fear that break men's souls  
Who lift too high their minds toward heaven, in  
thought

Too godlike grown for worship ; but of mood  
Equal, in good time reverent of time bad,  
And glad in ill days of the good that were.  
Nor now too would I fear thee, now misdoubt  
Lest fate should find thee lesser than thy doom,  
Chosen if thou be to bear and to be great  
Haply beyond all women ; and the word  
Speaks thee divine, dear queen, that speaks thee dead,  
Dead being alive, or quick and dead in one  
Shall not men call thee living ? yet I fear  
To slay thee timeless with my proper tongue,  
With lips, thou knowest, that love thee ; and such  
work

Was never laid of Gods on men, such word  
No mouth of man learnt ever, as from mine  
Most loth to speak thine ear most loth shall take  
And hold it hateful as the grave to hear.

## PRAXITHEA

That word there is not in all speech of man,  
King, that being spoken of the Gods and thee  
I have not heart to honour, or dare hold  
More than I hold thee or the Gods in hate  
{ Hearing ; but if my heart abhor it heard  
Being insubmissive, hold me not thy wife  
But use me like a stranger, whom thine hand  
Hath fed by chance and finding thence no thanks  
Flung off for shame's sake to forgetfulness.

## ERECHTHEUS

## ERECHTHEUS

O, of what breath shall such a word be made,  
Or from what heart find utterance? Would my  
tongue

Were rent forth rather from the quivering root  
Than made as fire or poison thus for thee.

## PRAXITHEA

But if thou speak of blood, and I that hear  
Be chosen of all for this land's love to die  
And save to thee thy city, know this well,  
Happiest I hold me of her seed alive.

## ERECHTHEUS

O sun that seest, what saying was this of thine,  
God, that thy power has breathed into my lips?  
For from no sunlit shrine darkling it came.

## PRAXITHEA

What portent from the mid oracular place  
Hath smitten thee so like a curse that flies  
Wingless, to waste men with its plagues? yet speak.

## ERECHTHEUS

Thy blood the Gods require not ; take this first.

## PRAXITHEA

To me than thee more grievous this should sound.

## ERECHTHEUS

That word rang truer and bitterer than it knew.

## PRAXITHEA

This is not then thy grief, to see me die?

ERECHTHEUS

Die shalt thou not, yet give thy blood to death.

PRAXITHEA

If this ring worse I know not ; strange it rang.

ERECHTHEUS

Alas, thou knowest not ; woe is me that know.

PRAXITHEA

And woe shall mine be, knowing ; yet halt not here.

ERECHTHEUS

Guiltless of blood this state may stand no more.

PRAXITHEA

Firm let it stand whatever bleed or fall.

ERECHTHEUS

O Gods, that I should say it shall and weep.

PRAXITHEA

Weep, and say this? no tears should bathe such words.

ERECHTHEUS

Woe's me that I must weep upon them, woe.

PRAXITHEA

What stain is on them for thy tears to cleanse?

ERECHTHEUS

A stain of blood unpurgeable with tears.

PRAXITHEA

Whence? for thou sayest it is and is not mine.

## ERECHTHEUS

Hear then and know why only of all men I  
That bring such news as mine is, I alone  
Must wash good words with weeping ; I and thou,  
Woman, must wail to hear men sing, must groan  
To see their joy who love us ; all our friends  
Save only we, and all save we that love  
This holiness of Athens, in our sight  
Shall lift their hearts up, in our hearing praise  
Gods whom we may not ; for to these they give  
Life of their children, flower of all their seed,  
For all their travail fruit, for all their hopes  
Harvest ; but we for all our good things, we  
Have at their hands which fill all these folk full  
Death, barrenness, child-slaughter, curses, cares,  
Sea-leaguer and land-shipwreck ; which of these,  
Which wilt thou first give thanks for ? all are thine.

## PRAXITHEA

What first they give who give this city good,  
For that first given to save it I give thanks  
First, and thanks heartier from a happier tongue,  
More than for any my peculiar grace  
Shown me and not my country ; next for this,  
That none of all these but for all these I  
Must bear my burden, and no eye but mine  
Weep of all women's in this broad land born  
Who see their land's deliverance ; but much more,  
But most for this I thank them most of all,  
That this their edge of doom is chosen to pierce  
My heart and not my country's ; for the sword  
Drawn to smite there and sharpened for such stroke  
Should wound more deep than any turned on me.

## CHORUS

Well fares the land that bears such fruit, and well  
The spirit that breeds such thought and speech in man.

## ERECHTHEUS

O woman, thou hast shamed my heart with thine,  
To show so strong a patience ; take then all ;  
For all shall break not nor bring down thy soul.  
The word that journeying to the bright God's shrine  
Who speaks askance and darkling, but his name  
Hath in it slaying and ruin broad writ out,  
I heard, hear thou : thus saith he ; There shall die  
One soul for all this people ; from thy womb  
Came forth the seed that here on dry bare ground  
Death's hand must sow untimely, to bring forth  
Nor blade nor shoot in season, being by name  
To the under Gods made holy, who require  
For this land's life her death and maiden blood  
To save a maiden city. Thus I heard,  
And thus with all said leave thee ; for save this  
No word is left us, and no hope alive.

## CHORUS

He hath uttered too surely his wrath not obscurely,  
nor wrapt as in mists of his breath, [Str.  
The master that lightens not hearts he erlightens, but  
gives them foreknowledge of death.  
As a bolt from the cloud hath he sent it aloud and  
proclaimed it afar,  
From the darkness and height of the horror of night  
hath he shown us a star.  
Star may I name it and err not, or flame shall I say,  
Born of the womb that was born for the tomb  
of the day ?

O Night, whom other but thee for mother, and Death  
     for the father, Night, [Ant.  
 Shall we dream to discover, save thee and thy lover,  
     to bring such a sorrow to sight?  
 From the slumberless bed for thy bedfellow spread  
     and his bride under earth  
 Hast thou brought forth a wild and insatiable child,  
     an unbearable birth.  
 Fierce are the fangs of his wrath, and the pangs  
     that they give;  
 None is there, none that may bear them, not one  
     that would live.

## CHTHONIA

Forth of the fine-spun folds of veils that hide  
 My virgin chamber toward the full-faced sun  
 I set my foot not moved of mine own will,  
 Unmaidenlike, nor with unprompted speed  
 Turn eyes too broad or doglike unabashed  
 On reverend heads of men and thence on thine,  
 Mother, now covered from the light and bowed  
 As hers who mourns her brethren; but what grief  
 Bends thy blind head thus earthward, holds thus mute,  
 I know not till thy will be to lift up  
 Toward mine thy sorrow-muffled eyes and speak;  
 And till thy will be would I know this not.

## PRAXITHEA

Old men and childless, or if sons ye have seen  
 And daughters, elder-born were these than mine,  
 Look on this child, how young of years, how sweet,  
 How scant of time and green of age her life  
 Puts forth its flower of girlhood; and her gait  
 How virginal, how soft her speech, her eyes



How seemly smiling ; wise should all ye be,  
All honourable and kindly men of age ;  
Now give me counsel and one word to say  
That I may bear to speak, and hold my peace  
Henceforth for all time even as all ye now.  
Dumb are ye all, bowed eyes and tongueless mouths,  
Unprofitable ; if this were wind that speaks,  
As much its breath might move you. Thou then,  
    child,  
Set thy sweet eyes on mine ; look through them well ;  
Take note of all the writing of my face  
As of a tablet or a tomb inscribed  
That bears me record ; lifeless now, my life  
Thereon that was think written ; brief to read,  
Yet shall the scripture sear thine eyes as fire  
And leave them dark as dead men's. Nay, dear child,  
Thou hast no skill, my maiden, and no sense  
To take such knowledge ; sweet is all thy lore,  
And all this bitter ; yet I charge thee learn  
And love and lay this up within thine heart,  
Even this my word ; less ill it were to die  
Than live and look upon thy mother dead,  
Thy mother-land that bare thee ; no man slain  
But him who hath seen it shall men count unblest,  
None blest as him who hath died and seen it not.

## CHTHONIA

That sight some God keep from me though I die.

## PRAXITHEA

A God from thee shall keep it ; fear not this.

## CHTHONIA

Thanks all my life long shall he gain of mine.

PRAXITHEA

Short gain of all yet shall he get of thee.

CHTHONIA

Brief be my life, yet so long live my thanks.

PRAXITHEA

So long? so little ; how long shall they live?

CHTHONIA

Even while I see the sunlight and thine eyes.

PRAXITHEA

Would mine might shut ere thine upon the sun.

CHTHONIA

For me thou prayest unkindly ; change that prayer.

PRAXITHEA

Not well for me thou sayest, and ill for thee

CHTHONIA

Nay, for me well, if thou shalt live, not I.

PRAXITHEA

How live, and lose these loving looks of thine?

CHTHONIA

It seems I too, thus praying, then, love thee not.

PRAXITHEA

Lov'st thou not life? what wouldst thou do to die?

CHTHONIA

Well, but not more than all things, love I life.

## PRAXITHEA

And fain wouldst keep it as thine age allows?

## CHTHONIA

Fain would I live, and fain not fear to die.

## PRAXITHEA

That I might bid thee die not ! Peace ; no more.

## CHORUS

A godlike race of grief the Gods have set  
For these to run matched equal, heart with heart.

## PRAXITHEA

Child of the chief of Gods, and maiden crowned,  
Queen of these towers and fostress of their king,  
Pallas, and thou my father's holiest head,  
A living well of life nor stanced nor stained,  
O God Cephissus, thee too charge I next,  
Be to me judge and witness ; nor thine ear  
Shall now my tongue invoke not, thou to me  
Most hateful of things holy, mournfullest  
Of all old sacred streams that wash the world,  
Ilissus, on whose marge at flowery play  
A whirlwind-footed bridegroom found my child  
And rapt her northward where mine elder-born  
Keeps now the Thracian bride-bed of a God  
Intolerable to seamen, but this land  
Finds him in hope for her sake favourable,  
A gracious son by wedlock ; hear me then  
Thou likewise, if with no faint heart or false  
The word I say be said, the gift be given,  
Which might I choose I had rather die than give  
Or speak and die not. Ere thy limbs were made

Or thine eyes lightened, strife, thou knowest, my  
child,

'Twixt God and God had risen, which heavenlier  
name

Should here stand hallowed, whose more liberal grace  
Should win this city's worship, and our land  
To which of these do reverence ; first the lord  
Whose wheels make lightnings of the foam-flowered  
sea

Here on this rock, whose height brow-bound with  
dawn

Is head and heart of Athens, one sheer blow  
Struck, and beneath the triple wound that shook  
The stony sinews and stark roots of the earth  
Sprang toward the sun a sharp salt fount, and sank  
Where lying it lights the heart up of the hill,  
A well of bright strange brine ; but she that reared  
Thy father with her same chaste fostering hand  
Set for a sign against it in our guard  
The holy bloom of the olive, whose hoar leaf  
High in the shadowy shrine of Pandrosus  
Hath honour of us all ; and of this strife  
The twelve most high Gods judging with one mouth  
Acclaimed her victress ; wroth whereat, as wronged  
That she should hold from him such prize and place,  
The strong king of the tempest-rifted sea  
Loosed reinless on the low Thriasian plain  
The thunders of his chariots, swallowing stunned  
Earth, beasts, and men, the whole blind foundering  
world

That was the sun's at morning, and ere noon  
Death's ; nor this only prey fulfilled his mind ;  
For with strange crook-toothed prows of Carian folk  
Who snatch a sanguine life out of the sea,

Thieves keen to pluck their bloody fruit of spoil  
From the grey fruitless waters, has their God  
Furrowed our shores to waste them, as the fields  
Were landward harried from the north with swords  
Aonian, sickles of man-slaughtering edge  
Ground for no hopeful harvest of live grain  
Against us in Bœotia ; these being spent,  
Now this third time his wind of wrath has blown  
Right on this people a mightier wave of war,  
Three times more huge a ruin ; such its ridge  
Foam-rimmed and hollow like the womb of heaven,  
But black for shining, and with death for life  
Big now to birth and ripe with child, full-blown  
With fear and fruit of havoc, takes the sun  
Out of our eyes, darkening the day, and blinds  
The fair sky's face unseasonably with change,  
A cloud in one and billow of battle, a surge  
High reared as heaven with monstrous surf of spears  
That shake on us their shadow, till men's heads  
Bend, and their hearts even with its forward wind  
Wither, so blasts ail seed in them of hope  
Its breath and blight of presage ; yea, even now  
The winter of this wind out of the deeps  
Makes cold our trust in comfort of the Gods  
And blind our eye toward outlook ; yet not here,  
Here never shall the Thracian plant on high  
For ours his father's symbol, nor with wreaths  
A strange folk wreathe it upright set and crowned  
Here where our natural people born behold  
The golden Gorgon of the shield's defence  
That screens their flowering olive, nor strange Gods  
Be graced, and Pallas here have praise no more.  
And if this be not I must give my child,  
Thee, mine own very blood and spirit of mine,

Thee to be slain. Turn from me, turn thine eyes  
A little from me ; I can bear not yet  
To see if still they smile on mine or no,  
If fear make faint the light in them, or faith  
Fix them as stars of safety. Need have we,  
Sore need of stars that set not in mid storm,  
Lights that outlast the lightnings ; yet my heart  
Endures not to make proof of thine or these,  
Not yet to know thee whom I made, and bare  
What manner of woman ; had I borne thee man,  
I had made no question of thine eyes or heart,  
Nor spared to read the scriptures in them writ,  
Wert thou my son ; yet couldst thou then but die  
Fallen in sheer fight by chance and charge of spears  
And have no more of memory, fill no tomb  
More famous than thy fellows in fair field,  
Where many share the grave, many the praise ;  
But one crown shall one only girl my child  
Wear, dead for this dear city, and give back life  
To him that gave her and to me that bare,  
And save two sisters living ; and all this,  
Is this not all good ? I shall give thee, child,  
Thee but by fleshly nature mine, to bleed  
For dear land's love ; but if the city fall  
What part is left me in my children then ?  
But if it stand and thou for it lie dead,  
Then hast thou in it a better part than we,  
A holier portion than we all ; for each  
Hath but the length of his own life to live,  
And this most glorious mother-land on earth  
To worship till that life have end ; but thine  
Hath end no more than hers ; thou, dead, shalt live  
Till Athens live not ; for the days and nights  
Given of thy bare brief dark dividual life,



Shall she give thee half all her agelong own  
 And all its glory ; for thou givest her these ;  
 But with one hand she takes and gives again  
 More than I gave or she requires of thee.  
 Come therefore, I will make thee fit for death,  
 I that could give thee, dear, no gift at birth  
 Save of light life that breathes and bleeds, even I  
 Will help thee to this better gift than mine  
 And lead thee by this little living hand  
 That death shall make so strong, to that great end  
 Whence it shall lighten like a God's, and strike  
 Dead the strong heart of battle that would break  
 Athens ; but ye, pray for this land, old men,  
 That it may bring forth never child on earth  
 To love it less, for none may more, than we.

## CHORUS

Out of the north wind grief came forth,      [*Str.* 1.  
 And the shining of a sword out of the sea.

• Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude  
 of this last,

The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.  
 Out of the north skies full of his cloud,  
 With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd  
 At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,  
 At the axle of a strong king's car  
 That has girded on the girdle of war—  
 With hands that lightened the skies in sunder  
 And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,  
 A God, a great God strange of name,  
 With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,  
 To the mountain bed of a maiden came,  
 Oreithyia, the bride mismated,



Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed  
 With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth  
 dead ;

Without garland, without glory, without song,  
 As a fawn by night on the hills belated,  
 Given over for a spoil unto the strong.

From lips how pale so keen a wail [Ant. 1.

At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,  
 When his breath that darkens air made a havoc  
 of her hair,

It rang from the mountain even to the wave ;  
 Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me !*  
 From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea :  
 And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee,  
 As a virgin overborne with shame,  
 She besought him by her spouseless fame,  
 By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried,  
 And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,  
 And all her flower of body, born  
 To match the maidenhood of morn,  
 With the might of the wind's wrath wrenched and  
 torn.

Vain, all vain as a dead man's vision  
 Falling by night in his old friends' sight,  
 To be scattered with slumber and slain ere light ;  
 Such a breath of such a bridegroom in that hour  
 Of her prayers made mock, of her fears derision,  
 And a ravage of her youth as of a flower.

With a leap of his limbs as a lion's, a cry from his  
 lips as of thunder, [Str. 2.

In a storm of amorous godhead filled with fire,  
 From the height of the heaven that was rent with  
 the roar of his coming in sunder,  
 Sprang the strong God on the spoil of his desire.

And the pines of the hills were as green reeds  
shattered,  
And their branches as buds of the soft spring  
scattered,  
And the west wind and east, and the sound of the  
south,  
Fell dumb at the blast of the north wind's mouth,  
At the cry of his coming out of heaven.  
And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows  
Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,  
And the depths of the sea were aghast, and  
whitened,  
And the crowns of their waves were as flame that  
lightened,  
And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.  
But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not  
her wrong that he wrought her, [Ant. 2.  
When her locks as leaves were shed before his  
breath,  
And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the  
cry was a God's that besought her,  
Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas  
with death.  
For the heart was molten within her to hear,  
And her knees beneath her were loosened for  
fear,  
And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,  
And the soft new bloom of the green earth's  
daughter  
Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree ;  
As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast  
lifted,  
On the strength of the stream of his dark breath  
drifted,

From the bosom of earth as a bride from the  
 mother,  
 With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother.  
 As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.

Of this hoary-headed woe [*Epode*]  
 Song made memory long ago ;  
 Now a younger grief to mourn  
 Needs a new song younger born.  
 Who shall teach our tongues to reach  
 What strange height of saddest speech,  
 For the new bride's sake that is given to be  
 A stay to fetter the foot of the sea,  
 Lest it quite spurn down and trample the town,  
 Ere the violets be dead that were plucked for  
     its crown,  
     Or its olive-leaf whiten and wither ?  
 Who shall say of the wind's way  
 That he journeyed yesterday,  
 Or the track of the storm that shall sound to-  
     morrow,  
 If the new be more than the grey-grown sorrow ?  
 For the wind of the green first season was keen,  
 And the blast shall be sharper than blew between  
     That the breath of the sea blows hither.

#### HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Old men, grey borderers on the march of death,  
 Tongue-fighters, tough of talk and sinewy speech,  
 Else nerveless, from no crew of such faint folk  
 Whose tongues are stouter than their hands come I  
 To bid not you to battle ; let them strike  
 Whose swords are sharper than your keen-tongued  
     wail,

And ye, sit fast and sorrow ; but what man  
Of all this land-folk and earth-labouring herd  
For heart or hand seems foremost, him I call  
If heart be his to hearken, him bid forth  
To try if one be in the sun's sight born  
Of all that grope and grovel on dry ground  
That may join hands in battle-grip for death  
With them whose seed and strength is of the sea.

## CHORUS

Know thou this much for all thy loud blast blown,  
We lack not hands to speak with, swords to plead,  
For proof of peril, not of boisterous breath,  
Sea-wind and storm of barren mouths that foam  
And rough rock's edge of menace ; and short space  
May lesson thy large ignorance and inform  
This insolence with knowledge if there live  
Men earth-begotten of no tenderer thews  
Than knit the great joints of the grim sea's brood  
With hasps of steel together ; heaven to help,  
One man shall break, even on their own flood's verge,  
That iron bulk of battle ; but thine eye  
That sees it now swell higher than sand or shore  
Haply shall see not when thine host shall shrink.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Not haply, nay, but surely, shall not thine.

## CHORUS

That lot shall no God give who fights for thee.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Shall Gods bear bit and bridle, fool, of men ?

## CHORUS

Nor them forbid we nor shalt thou constrain.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Yet say'st thou none shall make the good lot mine?

## CHORUS

Of thy side none, nor moved for fear of thee.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Gods hast thou then to baffle Gods of ours?

## CHORUS

Nor thine nor mine, but equal-souled are they.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Toward good and ill, then, equal-eyed of soul?

## CHORUS

Nay, but swift-eyed to note where ill thoughts breed.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Thy shaft word-feathered flies yet far of me.

## CHORUS

Pride knows not, wounded, till the heart be cleft.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

No shaft wounds deep whose wing is plumed with  
words.

## CHORUS

Lay that to heart, and bid thy tongue learn grace.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Grace shall thine own crave soon too late of mine.

## CHORUS

Boast thou till then, but I wage words no more.

## ERECHTHEUS

Man, what shrill wind of speech and wrangling air  
Blows in our ears a summons from thy lips  
Winged with what message, or what gift or grace  
Requiring ? none but what his hand may take  
Here may the foe think hence to reap, nor this  
Except some doom from Godward yield it him.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

King of this land-folk, by my mouth to thee  
Thus saith the son of him that shakes thine earth,  
Eumolpus ; now the stakes of war are set,  
For land or sea to win by throw and wear ;  
Choose therefore or to quit thy side and give  
The palm unfought for to his bloodless hand,  
Or by that father's sceptre, and the foot  
Whose tramp far off makes tremble for pure fear  
Thy soul-struck mother, piercing like a sword  
The immortal womb that bare thee ; by the waves  
That no man bridles and that bound thy world,  
And by the winds and storms of all the sea,  
He swears to raze from eyeshot of the sun  
This city named not of his father's name,  
And wash to deathward down one flood of doom  
This whole fresh brood of earth yeaned naturally,  
Green yet and faint in its first blade, unblown  
With yellow hope of harvest ; so do thou,

Seeing whom thy time is come to meet, for fear  
Yield, or gird up thy force to fight and die.

## ERECHTHEUS

To fight then be it ; for if to die or live,  
No man but only a God knows this much yet  
Seeing us fare forth, who bear but in our hands  
The weapons not the fortunes of our fight ;  
For these now rest as lots that yet undrawn  
Lie in the lap of the unknown hour ; but this  
I know, not thou, whose hollow mouth of storm  
Is but a warlike wind, a sharp salt breath  
That bites and wounds not ; death nor life of mine  
Shall give to death or lordship of strange kings  
The soul of this live city, nor their heel  
Bruise her dear brow discrowned, nor snaffle or goad  
Wound her free mouth or stain her sanguine side  
Yet masterless of man ; so bid thy lord  
Learn ere he weep to learn it, and too late  
Gnash teeth that could not fasten on her flesh,  
And foam his life out in dark froth of blood  
Vain as a wind's waif of the loud-mouthed sea  
Torn from the wave's edge whitening. Tell him this ;  
Though thrice his might were mustered for our  
scathe

And thicker set with fence of thorn-edged spears  
Than sands are whirled about the wintering beach  
When storms have swoln the rivers, and their blasts  
Have breached the broad sea-banks with stress of  
sea,

That waves of inland and the main make war  
As men that mix and grapple ; though his ranks  
Were more to number than all wildwood leaves  
The wind waves on the hills of all the world,



Yet should the heart not faint, the head not fall,  
The breath not fail of Athens. Say, the Gods  
From lips that have no more on earth to say  
Have told thee this the last good news or ill  
That I shall speak in sight of earth and sun  
Or he shall hear and see them : for the next  
That ear of his from tongue of mine may take  
Must be the first word spoken underground  
From dead to dead in darkness. Hence ; make  
haste,  
Lest war's fleet foot be swifter than thy tongue  
And I that part not to return again  
On him that comes not to depart away  
Be fallen before thee ; for the time is full,  
And with such mortal hope as knows not fear  
I go this high last way to the end of all.

## CHORUS

Who shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten  
them, [Str. 1.  
Or seal up the fountains of his tears for shame ?  
Song nor prayer nor prophecy shall slacken tears nor  
hasten them,  
Till grief be within him as a burnt-out flame ;  
Till the passion be broken in his breast  
And the might thereof molten into rest,  
And the rain of eyes that weep be dry,  
And the breath be stilled of lips that sigh.  
Death at last for all men is a harbour ; yet they flee  
from it, [Ant. 1.  
Set sails to the storm-wind and again to sea ;  
Yet for all their labour no whit further shall they be  
from it,  
Nor longer but wearier shall their life's work be.

And with anguish of travail until night  
Shall they steer into shipwreck out of sight,  
And with oars that break and shrouds that strain  
Shall they drive whence no ship steers again.  
Bitter and strange is the word of the God most  
high, [Str. 2.]

And steep the strait of his way.  
Through a pass rock-rimmed and narrow the light  
that gleams  
On the faces of men falls faint as the dawn of dreams,  
The dayspring of death as a star in an under sky  
Where night is the dead men's day.  
As darkness and storm is his will that on earth is  
done, [Ant. 2.]

As a cloud is the face of his strength.  
King of kings, holiest of holies, and mightiest of  
might,  
Lord of the lords of thine heaven that are humble in  
thy sight,  
Hast thou set not an end for the path of the fires of  
the sun,  
To appoint him a rest at length?  
Hast thou told not by measure the waves of the  
waste wide sea, [Str. 3.]  
And the ways of the wind their master and thrall to  
thee?

Hast thou filled not the furrows with fruit for  
the world's increase?  
Has thine ear not heard from of old or thine eye not  
read  
The thought and the deed of us living, the doom of  
us dead?

Hast thou made not war upon earth, and again  
made peace?

Therefore, O father, that seest us whose lives are a  
breath, [Ant. 3.

Take off us thy burden, and give us not wholly to  
death.

For lovely is life, and the law wherein all  
things live,

And gracious the season of each, and the hour of its  
kind,

And precious the seed of his life in a wise man's  
mind ;

But all save life for his life will a base man  
give.

But a life that is given for the life of the whole live  
land, [Str. 4.

From a heart unspotted a gift of a spotless hand,  
Of pure will perfect and free, for the land's life's sake,  
What man shall fear not to put forth his hand and  
take ?

For the fruit of a sweet life plucked in its pure green  
prime [Ant. 4.

On his hand who plucks is as blood, on his soul as  
crime.

With cursing ye buy not blessing, nor peace with  
strife,

And the hand is hateful that chaffers with death for  
life.

Hast thou heard, O my heart, and endurest [Str. 5.

The word that is said,

What a garland by sentence found surest

Is wrought for what head ?

With what blossomless flowerage of sea-foam and  
blood-coloured foliage inwound

It shall crown as a heifer's for slaughter the forehead  
for marriage uncrowned ?

How the veils and the wreaths that should  
cover [Ant. 5.]

The brows of the bride  
Shall be shed by the breath of what lover  
And scattered aside ?

With a blast of the mouth of what bridegroom the  
crowns shall be cast from her hair,  
And her head by what altar made humble be left of  
them naked and bare ?

At a shrine unbeloved of a God unbeholden a gift  
shall be given for the land, [Str. 6.]

That its ramparts though shaken with clamour and  
horror of manifold waters may stand :

That the crests of its citadels crowned and its turrets  
that thrust up their heads to the sun  
May behold him unblinded with darkness of waves  
overmastering their bulwarks begun.

As a bride shall they bring her, a prey for the bride-  
groom, a flower for the couch of her lord ; [Ant. 6.]

They shall muffle her mouth that she cry not or  
curse them, and cover her eyes from the sword.

They shall fasten her lips as with bit and with bridle,  
and darken the light of her face,

That the soul of the slayer may not falter, his heart  
be not molten, his hand give not grace.

If she weep then, yet may none that hear take  
pity ; [Str. 7.]

If she cry not, none should hearken though she  
cried.

Shall a virgin shield thine head for love, O city,  
With a virgin's blood anointed as for pride ?

Yet we held thee dear and hallowed of her favour,  
[Ant. 7.]

Dear of all men held thy people to her heart ;

Nought she loves the breath of blood, the sanguine  
savour,

Who hath built with us her throne and chosen  
her part.

Bloodless are her works, and sweet [Epode.

All the ways that feel her feet ;

From the empire of her eyes

Light takes life and darkness flies ;

From the harvest of her hands

Wealth strikes root in prosperous lands ;

Wisdom of her word is made ;

At her strength is strength afraid ;

From the beam of her bright spear

War's fleet foot goes back for fear ;

In her shrine she reared the birth

Fire-begotten on live earth ;

Glory from her helm was shed

On his olive-shadowed head ;

By no hand but his shall she

Scourge the storms back of the sea,

To no fame but his shall give

Grace, being dead, with hers to live,

And in double name divine

Half the godhead of their shrine.

But now with what word, with what woe may we  
meet

The timeless passage of piteous feet,

Hither that bend to the last way's end

They shall walk upon earth ?

What song be rolled for a bride black-stoled

And the mother whose hand of her hand hath hold ?

For anguish of heart is my soul's strength broken

And the tongue sealed fast that would fain have  
spoken,

To behold thee, O child of so bitter a birth  
That we counted so sweet,  
What way thy steps to what bride-feast tend,  
What gift he must give that shall wed thee for  
token  
If the bridegroom be goodly to greet.

## CHTHONIA

People, old men of my city, lordly wise and hoar of  
head,  
I a spouseless bride and crownless but with garlands  
of the dead  
From the fruitful light turn silent to my dark un-  
childed bed.

## CHORUS

Wise of word was he too surely, but with deadlier  
wisdom wise,  
First who gave thee name from under earth, no breath  
from upper skies,  
When, foredoomed to this day's darkness, their first  
daylight filled thine eyes.

## PRAXITHEA

Child, my child that wast and art but death's and now  
no more of mine,  
Half my heart is cloven with anguish by the sword  
made sharp for thine,  
Half exalts its wing for triumph, that I bare thee  
thus divine.

## CHTHONIA

Though for me the sword's edge thirst that sets no  
point against thy breast,  
Mother, O my mother, where I drank of life and fell  
on rest.  
Thine, not mine, is all the grief that marks this hour  
accurst and blest.

## CHORUS

Sweet thy sleep and sweet the bosom was that gave  
thee sleep and birth ;  
Harder now the breast, and girded with no marriage-  
band for girth,  
Where thine head shall sleep, the namechild of the  
lords of under earth

## PRAXITHEA

Dark the name and dark the gifts they gave thee,  
child, in childbirth were,  
Sprung from him that rent the womb of earth, a  
bitter seed to bear,  
Born with groanings of the ground that gave him  
way toward heaven's dear air.

## CHTHONIA

Day to day makes answer, first to last, and life to  
death ; but I,  
Born for death's sake, die for life's sake, if indeed this  
be to die,  
This my doom that seals me deathless till the springs  
of time run dry.



## CHORUS

Children shalt thou bear to memory, that to man  
shalt bring forth none ;  
Yea, the lordliest that lift eyes and hearts and songs  
to meet the sun,  
Names to fire men's ears like music till the round  
world's race be run.

## PRAXITHEA

I thy mother, named of Gods that wreak revenge and  
brand with blame,  
Now for thy love shall be loved as thou, and famous  
with thy fame,  
While this city's name on earth shall be for earth her  
mightiest name.

## CHTHONIA

That I may give this poor girl's blood of mine  
Scarce yet sun-warmed with summer, this thin life  
Still green with flowerless growth of seedling days,  
To build again my city ; that no drop  
Fallen of these innocent veins on the cold ground  
But shall help knit the joints of her firm walls  
To knead the stones together, and make sure  
The band about her maiden girdlestead  
Once fastened, and of all men's violent hands  
Inviolable for ever ; these to me  
Were no such gifts as crave no thanksgiving,  
If with one blow dividing the sheer life  
I might make end, and one pang wind up all  
And seal mine eyes from sorrow ; for such end  
The Gods give none they love not ; but my heart,  
That leaps up lightened of all sloth or fear

To take the sword's point, yet with one thought's  
load

Flags, and falls back, broken of wing, that halts  
Maimed in mid flight for thy sake and borne down,  
Mother, that in the places where I played  
An arm's length from thy bosom and no more  
Shalt find me never, nor thine eye wax glad  
To mix with mine its eyesight and for love  
Laugh without word, filled with sweet light, and speak  
Divine dumb things of the inward spirit and heart,  
Moved silently ; nor hand or lip again  
Touch hand or lip of either, but for mine  
Shall thine meet only shadows of swift night,  
Dreams and dead thoughts of dead things ; and the  
bed

Thou strewedst, a sterile place for all time, strewn  
For my sleep only, with its void sad sheets  
Shall vex thee, and the unfruitful coverlid  
For empty days reproach me dead, that leave  
No profit of my body, but am gone  
As one not worth being born to bear no seed,  
A sapless stock and branchless ; yet thy womb  
Shall want not honour of me, that brought forth  
For all this people freedom, and for earth  
From the unborn city born out of my blood  
To light the face of all men evermore  
Glory ; but lay thou this to thy great heart  
Whereunder in the dark of birth conceived  
Mine unlit life lay girdled with the zone  
That bound thy bridal bosom ; set this thought  
Against all edge of evil as a sword  
To beat back sorrow, that for all the world  
Thou brought'st me forth a saviour, who shall save  
Athens ; for none but I from none but thee

Shall take this death for garland ; and the men  
Mine unknown children of unsounded years,  
My sons unrisen shall rise up at thine hand,  
Sown of thy seed to bring forth seed to thee,  
And call thee most of all most fruitful found  
Blessed ; but me too for my barren womb  
More than my sisters for their children born  
Shall these give honour, yea in scorn's own place  
Shall men set love and bring for mockery praise  
And thanks for curses ; for the dry wild vine  
Scoffed at and cursed of all men that was I  
Shall shed them wine to make the world's heart  
warm,

That all eyes seeing may lighten, and all ears  
Hear and be kindled ; such a draught to drink  
Shall be the blood that bids this dust bring forth,  
The chaliced life here spilt on this mine earth,  
Mine, my great father's mother ; whom I pray  
Take me now gently, tenderly take home,  
And softly lay in his my cold chaste hand  
Who is called of men by my name, being of Gods  
Charged only and chosen to bring men under earth,  
And now must lead and stay me with his staff  
A silent soul led of a silent God,  
Toward sightless things led sightless ; and on earth  
I see now but the shadow of mine end,  
And this last light of all for me in heaven.

## PRAXITHEA

Farewell I bid thee ; so bid thou not me,  
Lest the Gods hear and mock us ; yet on these  
I lay the weight not of this grief, nor cast  
Ill words for ill deeds back ; for if one say

They have done men wrong, what hurt have they to  
hear,  
Or he what help to have said it? surely, child,  
If one among men born might say it and live  
Blameless, none more than I may, who being vexed  
Hold yet my peace ; for now through tears enough  
Mine eyes have seen the sun that from this day  
Thine shall see never more ; and in the night  
Enough has blown of evil, and mine ears  
With wail enough the winds have filled, and brought  
Too much of cloud from over the sharp sea  
To mar for me the morning ; such a blast  
Rent from these wide void arms and helpless breast  
Long since one graft of me disbranched, and bore  
Beyond the wild ways of the unwandered world  
And loud wastes of the thunder-throated sea,  
Springs of the night and openings of the heaven,  
The old garden of the Sun ; whence never more  
From west or east shall winds bring back that blow  
From folds of opening heaven or founts of night  
The flower of mine once ravished, born my child  
To bear strange children ; nor on wings of theirs  
Shall comfort come back to me, nor their sire  
Breathe help upon my peril, nor his strength  
Raise up my weakness ; but of Gods and men  
I drift unsteered on ruin, and the wave  
Darkens my head with imminent height, and hangs  
Dumb, filled too full with thunder that shall leave  
These ears death-deafened when the tide finds tongue  
And all its wrath bears on them ; thee, O child.  
I help not, nor am holpen ; fain, ah fain,  
More than was ever mother born of man,  
Were I to help thee ; fain beyond all prayer,  
Beyond all thought fain to redeem thee, torn

More timeless from me sorrowing than the dream  
That was thy sister ; so shalt thou be too,  
Thou but a vision, shadow-shaped of sleep,  
By grief made out of nothing ; now but once  
I touch, but once more hold thee, one more kiss  
This last time and none other ever more  
Leave on thy lips and leave them. Go ; thou wast  
My heart, my heart's blood, life-blood of my life,  
My child, my nursling : now this breast once thine  
Shall rear again no children ; never now  
Shall any mortal blossom born like thee  
Lie there, nor ever with small silent mouth  
Draw the sweet springs dry for an hour that feed  
The blind blithe life that knows not ; never head  
Rest here to make these cold veins warm, nor eye  
Laugh itself open with the lips that reach  
Lovingly toward a fount more loving ; these  
Death makes as all good lesser things now dead,  
And all the latter hopes that flowered from these  
And fall as these fell fruitless ; no joy more  
Shall man take of thy maidenhood, no tongue  
Praise it ; no good shall eyes get more of thee  
That lightened for thy love's sake. Now, take note,  
Give ear, O all ye people, that my word  
May pierce your hearts through, and the stroke that  
cleaves  
Be fruitful to them ; so shall all that hear  
Grow great at heart with child of thought most high  
And bring forth seed in season ; this my child,  
This flower of this my body, this sweet life,  
This fair live youth I give you, to be slain,  
Spent, shed, poured out, and perish ; take my gift  
And give it death and the under Gods who crave  
So much for that they give ; for this is more,

Much more is this than all we ; for they give  
Freedom, and for a blast, an air of breath,  
A little soul that is not, they give back  
Light for all eyes, cheer for all hearts, and life  
That fills the world's width full of fame and praise  
And mightier love than children's. This they give,  
The grace to make thy country great, and wrest  
From time and death power to take hold on her  
And strength to scathe for ever ; and this gift,  
Is this no more than man's love is or mine,  
Mine and all mothers' ? nay, where that seems more,  
Where one loves life of child, wife, father, friend,  
Son, husband, mother, more than this, even there  
Are all these lives worth nothing, all loves else  
With this love slain and buried, and their tomb  
A thing for shame to spit on ; for what love  
Hath a slave left to love with ? or the heart  
Base-born and bound in bondage fast to fea.  
What should it do to love thee ? what hath he,  
The man that hath no country ? Gods nor men  
Have such to friend, yoked beast-like to base life,  
Vile, fruitless, grovelling at the foot of death,  
Landless and kinless thralls of no man's blood,  
Unchilded and unmothered, abject limbs  
That breed things abject ; but who loves on earth  
Not friend, wife, husband, father, mother, child,  
Nor loves his own life for his own land's sake,  
But only this thing most, more this than all,  
He loves all well and well of all is loved,  
And this love lives for ever. See now, friends,  
My countrymen, my brothers, with what heart  
I give you this that of your hands again  
The Gods require for Athens ; as I give  
So give ye to them what their hearts would have



Who shall give back things better ; yea, and these  
I take for me to witness, all these Gods,  
Were their great will more grievous than it is,  
Not one but three, for this one thin-spun thread  
A threefold band of children would I give  
For this land's love's sake ; for whose love to-day  
I bid thee, child, fare deathward and farewell.

## CHORUS

O wofullest of women, yet of all  
Happiest, thy word be hallowed ; in all time  
Thy name shall blossom, and from strange new  
tongues  
High things be spoken of thee ; for such grace  
The Gods have dealt to no man, that on none  
Have laid so heavy sorrow. From this day  
Live thou assured of godhead in thy blood,  
And in thy fate no lowlier than a God  
In all good things and evil ; such a name  
Shall be thy child this city's, and thine own  
Next hers that called it Atnens. Go now forth  
Blest, and grace with thee to the doors of death.

## CHTHONIA

O city, O glory of Athens, O crown of my father's  
land, farewell.

## CHORUS

For welfare is given her of thee.

## CHTHONIA

O Goddess, be good to thy people, that in them  
dominion and freedom may dwell.



CHORUS

Turn from us the strengths of the sea.

CHTHONIA

Let glory's and theirs be one name in the mouths of  
all nations made glad with the sun.

CHORUS

For the cloud is blown back with thy breath.

CHTHONIA

With the long last love of mine eyes I salute thee,  
O land where my days now are done.

CHORUS

But her life shall be born of thy death.

CHTHONIA

I put on me the darkness thy shadow, my mother, and  
symbol, O Earth, of my name.

CHORUS

For thine was her witness from birth.

CHTHONIA

In thy likeness I come to thee darkling, a daughter  
whose dawn and her even are the same.

CHORUS

Be thine heart to her gracious, O Earth.

CHTHONIA

To thine own kind be kindly, for thy son's name's  
sake.

## CHORUS

That sons unborn may praise thee and thy first-born son.

## CHTHONIA

Give me thy sleep, who give thee all my life awake.

## CHORUS

Too swift a sleep, ere half the web of day be spun.

## CHTHONIA

Death brings the shears or ever life wind up the weft.

## CHORUS

Their edge is ground and sharpened ; who shall stay his hand ?

## CHTHONIA

The woof is thin, a small short life, with no thread left.

## CHORUS

Yet hath it strength, stretched out, to shelter all the land.

## CHTHONIA

Too frail a tent for covering, and a screen too strait.

## CHORUS

Yet broad enough for buckler shall thy sweet life be.

## CHTHONIA

A little bolt to bar off battle from the gate.

## CHORUS

A wide sea-wall, that shatters the besieging sea.

## CHTHONIA

I lift up mine eyes from the skirts of the shadow, [*Str.*  
 From the border of death to the limits of light ;  
 O streams and rivers of mountain and meadow  
 That hallow the last of my sight,  
 O father that wast of my mother  
 Cephisus, O thou too his brother  
 From the bloom of whose banks as a prey  
 Winds harried my sister away,  
 O crown on the world's head lying  
 Too high for its waters to drown,  
 Take yet this one word of me dying,  
 O city, O crown.

Though land-wind and sea wind with mouths that  
 blow slaughter [*Ant.*  
 Should gird them to battle against thee again,  
 New-born of the blood of a maiden thy daughter,  
 The rage of their breath shall be vain.  
 For their strength shall be quenched and made  
 idle,  
 And the foam of their mouths find a bridle,  
 And the height of their heads bow down  
 At the foot of the towers of the town.  
 Be blest and beloved as I love thee  
 Of all that shall draw from thee breath ;  
 Be thy life as the sun's is above thee ;  
 I go to my death.

## CHORUS

Many loves of many a mood and many a kind [*Str.* 1.  
 Fill the life of man, and mould the secret mind ;  
 Many days bring many dooms, to loose and bind ;

Sweet is each in season, good the gift it brings,  
Sweet as change of night and day with altering  
wings,

Night that lulls world-weary day, day that comforts  
night,

Night that fills our eyes with sleep, day that fills with  
light.

None of all is lovelier, loftier love is none, [*Ant.* 1.  
Less is bride's for bridegroom, mother's less for  
son,

Child, than this that crowns and binds up all in  
one ;

Love of thy sweet light, thy fostering breast and  
hand,

Mother Earth, and city chosen, and natural land ;  
Hills that bring the strong streams forth, heights of  
heavenlier air,

Fields aflower with winds and suns, woods with  
shadowing hair.

But none of the nations of men shall they liken to  
thee, [*Str.* 2.

Whose children true-born and the fruit of thy body  
are we.

The rest are thy sons but in figure, in word are thy  
seed ;

We only the flower of thy travail, thy children in-  
deed.

Of thy soil hast thou fashioned our limbs, of thy  
waters their blood,

And the life of thy springs everlasting is fount of our  
flood.

No wind oversea blew us hither adrift on thy shore,  
None sowed us by land in thy womb that conceived  
us and bore.

But the stroke of the shaft of the sunlight that brought  
us to birth

Pierced only and quickened thy furrows to bear us,  
O Earth.

With the beams of his love wast thou cloven as with  
iron or fire,

And the life in thee yearned for his life, and grew  
great with desire.

And the hunger and thirst to be wounded and healed  
with his dart

Made fruitful the love in thy veins and the depth of  
thine heart.

And the showers out of heaven overflowing and liquid  
with love

Fulfilled thee with child of his godhead as rain from  
above.

Such desire had ye twain of each other, till molten  
in one

[*Ant.* 2.

Ye might bear and beget of your bodies the fruits of  
the sun.

And the trees in their season brought forth and were  
kindled anew

By the warmth of the moisture of marriage, the child-  
bearing dew.

And the firstlings were fair of the wedlock of heaven  
and of earth ;

All countries were bounteous with blossom and  
burgeon of birth.

Green pastures of grass for all cattle, and life-giving  
corn ;

But here of thy bosom, here only, the man-child was  
born.

All races but one are as aliens engrafted or  
sown,

Strange children and changelings ; but we, O our  
mother, thine own.

Thy nurslings are others, and seedlings they know not  
of whom ;

For these hast thou fostered, but us thou hast borne  
in thy womb.

Who is he of us all, O beloved, that owe thee for birth,  
Who would give not his blood for his birth's sake, O  
mother, O Earth ?

What landsman is he that was fostered and reared of  
thine hand

Who may vaunt him as we may in death though he  
died for the land ?

Well doth she therefore who gives thee in guerdon  
The bloom of the life of thy giving ; [*Epode.*

And thy body was bowed by no fruitless burden,  
That bore such fruit of thee living.

For her face was not darkened for fear,

For her eyelids conceived not a tear,

Nor a cry from her lips craved pity ;

But her mouth was a fountain of song,

And her heart as a citadel strong

That guards the heart of the city.

#### MESSENGER

High things of strong-souled men that loved their land  
On brass and stone are written, and their deeds  
On high days chanted ; but none graven or sung  
That ever set men's eyes or spirits on fire,  
Athenians, has the sun's height seen, or earth  
Heard in her depth reverberate as from heaven,  
More worth men's praise and good report of Gods  
Than here I bring for record in your ears.

For now being come to the altar, where as priest  
Death ministering should meet her, and his hand  
Seal her sweet eyes asleep, the maiden stood,  
With light in all her face as of a bride  
Smiling, or shine of festal flame by night  
Far flung from towers of triumph ; and her lips  
Trembled with pride in pleasure, that no fear  
Blanched them nor death before his time drank dry  
The blood whose bloom fulfilled them ; for her cheeks  
Lightened, and brighter than a bridal veil  
Her hair enrobed her bosom and enrolled  
From face to feet the body's whole soft length  
As with a cloud sun-saturate ; then she spake  
With maiden tongue words manlike, but her eyes  
Lit mildly like a maiden's : *Countrymen,*  
*With more goodwill and height of happier heart*  
*I give me to you than my mother bare,*  
*And go more gladly this great way to death*  
*Than young men bound to battle.* Then with face  
Turned to the shadowiest part of all the shrine  
And eyes fast set upon the further shade,  
*Take me, dear Gods ;* and as some form had shone  
From the deep hollow shadow, some God's tongue  
Answered, *I bless you that your guardian grace*  
*Gives me to guard this country, takes my blood,*  
*Your child's by name, to heal it.* Then the priest  
Set to the flower-sweet snow of her soft throat  
The sheer knife's edge that severed it, and loosed  
From the fair bondage of so spotless flesh  
So strong a spirit ; and all that girt them round  
Gazing, with souls that hung on that sad stroke,  
Groaned, and kept silence after while a man  
Might count how far the fresh blood crept, and bathed  
How deep the dark robe and the bright shrine's base



Red-rounded with a running ring that grew  
More large and duskier as the wells that fed  
Were drained of that pure effluence : but the queen  
Groaned not nor spake nor wept, but as a dream  
Floats out of eyes awakening so past forth  
Ghost-like, a shadow of sorrow, from all sight  
To the inner court and chamber where she sits  
Dumb, till word reach her of this whole day's end.

## CHORUS

More hapless born by far [Str.]  
Beneath some wintrier star,  
One sits in stone among high Lydian snows,  
The tomb of her own woes :  
Yet happiest was once of the daughters of Gods, and  
divine by her sire and her lord,  
Ere her tongue was a shaft for the hearts of her sons,  
for the heart of her husband a sword.  
For she, too great of mind, [Ant.]  
Grown through her good things blind,  
With godless lips and fire of her own breath  
Spake all her house to death ;  
But thou, no mother unmothered, nor kindled in  
spirit with pride of thy seed,  
Thou hast hallowed thy child for a blameless blood-  
offering, and ransomed thy race by thy deed.

## MESSENGER

As flower is grafted on flower, so grief on grief  
Engrafted brings forth new blossoms of strange tears,  
Fresh buds and green fruits of an alien pain ;  
For now flies rumour on a dark wide wing,

Murmuring of woes more than ye knew, most like  
Hers whom ye hailed most wretched ; for the twain  
Last left of all this house that wore last night  
A threefold crown of maidens, and to-day  
Should let but one fall dead out of the wreath,  
If mad with grief we know not and sore love  
For this their sister, or with shame soul-stung  
To outlive her dead or doubt lest their lives too  
The Gods require to seal their country safe  
And bring the oracular doom to perfect end,  
Have slain themselves, and fallen at the altar-foot  
Lie by their own hands done to death ; and fear  
Shakes all the city as winds a wintering tree,  
And as dead leaves are men's hearts blown about  
And shrunken with ill thoughts, and flowerless hopes  
Parched up with presage, lest the piteous blood  
Shed of these maidens guiltless fall and fix  
On this land's forehead like a curse that cleaves  
To the unclean soul's inextinguishable hunted head  
Whom his own crime tracks hotlier than a hound  
To life's veiled end unsleeping ; and this hour  
Now blackens toward the battle that must close  
All gates of hope and fear on all their hearts  
Who tremble toward its issue, knowing not yet  
If blood may buy them surety, cleanse or soil  
The helpless hands men raise and reach no stay.

## CHORUS

Ill thoughts breed fear, and fear ill words ; but these  
The Gods turn from us that have kept their law.

Let us lift up the strength of our hearts in song, [*Str. 1.*

And our souls to the height of the darkling day.

If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,

Be the spirit that breathes in us life more strong,  
Though the prow reel round and the helm point  
wrong,

And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way.  
For the steersman time sits hidden astern, [*Ant. 1.*

With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,  
And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume  
As the blast shears off and the oar-blades  
churn

The foam of our lives that to death return,  
Blown back as they break to the gulping gloom.  
What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow,  
what sound, [*Str. 2.*

From the world beyond earth, from the night  
underground,  
That scatters from wings un beholden the weight of  
its darkness around?

For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded  
its eye, [*Ant. 2.*

As the soul of a sick man ready to die,  
With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if an  
end be not nigh.

O Earth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now to  
see and to hear [*Str. 3.*

What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals  
mine ear?

O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not  
shrunk up and withered for fear?

Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds  
are in quest by day, [*Ant. 3.*

And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them  
crying for their prey,

And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out of  
his course as a blind man astray.

From east to west of the south sea-line [Str. 4.  
Glitters the lightning of spears that shine ;  
As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the skirts  
of the sea

By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,  
So black behind them the live storm serried  
Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the  
terror to be.

Shall the sea give death whom the land gave  
birth ? [Ant. 4.

O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,  
Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it,  
help us or hide.

As a sword is the heart of the God thy  
brother,

But thine as the heart of a new-made mother,  
To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his  
tide.

O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain,  
[Str. 5.

For the gift we gave thee what gift hast thou given  
us again ?

O God dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forth-  
faring ships by night,

What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast  
of thy breath ?

A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of  
death,

For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father,  
who finds thee against him in fight.

Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of  
our cry ; [Ant. 5.

Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of war  
be dry ;

Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of our foe-  
men, the sword of their strength and the shield ;  
As vapours in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks  
of ships,  
So break thou the ranks of their spears with the  
breath of thy lips,  
Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with  
raiment the face of the sword-ploughed field.  
O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born  
with the day, [Str. 6.  
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged  
for the same wide way,  
Give up not the house of thy kin to the host thou  
hast marshalled from northward for prey.  
From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the  
mists of the fountains of night, [Ant. 6.  
From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps  
laughing, on fire for his flight,  
Come down with their doom in thine hand on the  
ships thou hast brought up against us to fight.  
For now not in word but in deed is the harvest of  
spears begun, [Str. 7.  
And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its lightning  
outlightens the sun.  
From the springs of the morning it thunders and  
lightens across and afar  
To the wave where the moonset ends and the fall of  
the last low star.  
With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and an earth  
quake of men that meet,  
Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the furrows  
take fire from his feet.  
Earth groans from her great rent heart, and the  
hollows of rocks are afraid,

And the mountains are moved, and the valleys as  
waves in a storm-wind swayed.

From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge  
and the dark loud shore,

Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling  
of wheels that roar.

As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that  
foam as they gnash

Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of the  
poles that crash.

The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of  
the mad steeds champ,

Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's  
foot rings in their tramp.

For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven is  
arrayed for the fight,

Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering  
as clouds in the night.

Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trumpets,  
with darkness mine eyes,

At the sound of the sea's host charging that deafens  
the roar of the sky's.

White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and horse  
against horse reels hurled,

And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide for  
the spoil of the world.

And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck of  
chariots that founder on land, [Ant. 7.]

And the horsemen are broken with breach as of  
breakers, and scattered as sand.

Through the roar and recoil of the charges that  
mingle their cries and confound,

Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that flash  
through the darkness of sound.



As the swing of the sea churned yellow that sways  
with the wind as it swells  
Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the chargers  
that clash with their bells ;  
And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through the  
burst of the wave as it shocks  
Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through the roar  
of the surge on the rocks :  
And the heads of the steeds in their headgear of war,  
and their corsleted breasts,  
Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that brighten  
the storm with their crests,  
Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the ship-  
wrecking wind as they rise,  
Filled full of the terror and thunder of water, that  
slays as it dies.  
So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fearful the  
fire of their breath,  
And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so bright  
with the lightnings of death ;  
And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when the  
jaws of its gulf are as graves,  
And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken mane  
on the ridges of waves :  
And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick with a  
dewfall of blood  
As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of the  
manslaying flood.  
And the whole plain reels and resounds as the fields  
of the sea by night  
When the stroke of the wind falls darkling, and death  
is the seafarer's light.

But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of the day  
nigh dead,

[*Epode.*



What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand hath  
muffled thine head ?

O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or ward off  
thy wrath by what name,

With what prayer shall we seek to thee, soothe with  
what incense, assuage with what gift,

If thy light be such only as lightens to deathward  
the seaman adrift

With the fire of his house for a beacon, that foemen  
have wasted with flame ?

Arise now, lift up thy light ; give ear to us, put forth  
thine hand,

Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance, a lamp for  
the night of the land.

Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp for the  
dead ;

O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark of our  
dread.

Who hath blinded thee ? who hath prevailed on  
thee ? who hath ensnared ?

Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts for thy  
battle prepared ?

Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a chain for  
thine arm that was bared ?

Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and the might  
of thy master declared.

O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of  
day,

What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its  
garland away ?

To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed  
of the light,

And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet  
of night ?

Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and  
goaded their flanks with affright,  
To the race of a course that we know not on ways  
that are hid from our sight.

As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their  
chariot are whirled,

4 And the light of its passage is night on the face of  
the world.

And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help  
from on high,

But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of  
thine eye.

For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water  
bows down and goes by,

To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left us  
untimely to die.

But what light is it now leaps forth on the land  
Enkindling the waters and ways of the air

From thy forehead made bare,

From the gleam of thy bow-bearing hand?

Hast thou set not thy right hand again to the string,  
With the back-bowed horns bent sharp for a spring

And the barbed shaft drawn,

Till the shrill steel sing and the tense nerve ring

That pierces the heart of the dark with dawn,

O huntsman, O king,

When the flame of thy face hath twilight in chase

As a hound hath a blood-mottled fawn?

He has glanced into golden the grey sea-strands,

And the clouds are shot through with the fires of  
his hands,

And the height of the hollow of heaven that he fills

As the heart of a strong man is quickened and  
thrills ;

High over the folds of the low-lying lands,  
On the shadowless hills

As a guard on his watchtower he stands.  
All earth and all ocean, all depth and all height,  
At the flash of an eyebeam are filled with his might :  
The sea roars backward, the storm drops dumb,  
And silence as dew on the fire of the fight  
Falls kind in our ears as his face in our sight  
With presage of peace to come.

Fresh hope in my heart from the ashes of dread  
Leaps clear as a flame from the pyres of the dead,  
That joy out of woe  
May arise as the spring out of tempest and snow,  
With the flower-feasted month in her hands rose-  
red

Borne soft as a babe from the bearing-bed.  
Yet it knows not indeed if a God be friend,  
If rescue may be from the rage of the sea,  
Or the wrath of its lord have end.

For the season is full now of death or of birth,  
To bring forth life, or an end of all ;  
And we know not if anything stand or fall  
That is girdled about with the round sea's girth  
As a town with its wall ;

But thou that art highest of the Gods most high,  
That art lord if we live, that art lord though we die,  
Have heed of the tongues of our terror that cry  
For a grace to the children of Earth.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Sons of Athens, heavy-laden with the holy weight of  
years,  
Be your hearts as young men's lightened of their  
loathlier load of fears ;

For the wave is sunk whose thunder shoreward shook  
the shuddering lands,  
And unbreached of warring waters Athens like a sea-  
rock stands.

## CHORUS

Well thy word has cheered us, well thy face and  
glittering eyes, that spake  
Ere thy tongue spake words of comfort: yet no  
pause behoves it make  
Till the whole good hap find utterance that the Gods  
have given at length.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

All is this, that yet the city stands unforced by  
stranger strength.

## CHORUS

Sweeter sound might no mouth utter in man's ear  
than this thy word.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Feed thy soul then full of sweetness till some bitterer  
note be heard.

## CHORUS

None, if this ring sure, can mar the music fallen from  
heaven as rain.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

If no fire of sun or star untimely sear the tender  
grain.

## CHORUS

Fresh the dewfall of thy tidings on our hopes re-  
flowering lies.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Till a joyless shower and fruitless blight them, raining from thine eyes.

CHORUS

Bitter springs have barren issues ; these bedew grief's arid sands.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Such thank-offerings ask such altars as expect thy suppliant hands.

CHORUS

Tears for triumph, wail for welfare, what strange godhead's shrine requires ?

ATHENIAN HERALD

Death's or victory's be it, a funeral torch feeds all its festal fires.

CHORUS

Like a star should burn the beacon flaming from our city's head.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Like a balefire should the flame go up that says the king is dead.

CHORUS

Out of heaven, a wild-haired meteor, shoots this new sign, scattering fear.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Yea, the word has wings of fire that hovered, loth to burn thine ear.

## ERECHTHEUS

## CHORUS

From thy lips it leapt forth loosened on a shrill and shadowy wing.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Long they faltered, fain to hide it deep as death that hides the king.

## CHORUS

Dead with him blind hope lies blasted by the lighting of one sword.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

On thy tongue truth wars with error ; no man's edge hath touched thy lord.

## CHORUS

False was thine then, jangling menace like a war-steed's brow-bound bell ?

## ATHENIAN HERALD

False it rang not joy nor sorrow ; but by no man's hand he fell.

## CHORUS

Vainly then good news and evil through so faint a trumpet spake.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

All too long thy soul yet labours, as who sleeping fain would wake,  
Waking, fain would fall on sleep again ; the woe thou knowest not yet,  
When thou knowest, shall make thy memory thirst and hunger to forget.

CHORUS

Long my heart has hearkened, hanging on thy  
 clamorous ominous cry,  
 Fain yet fearful of the knowledge whence it looks to  
 live or die ;  
 Now to take the perfect presage of thy dark and side-  
 long flight  
 Comes a surer soothsayer sorrowing, sable-stoled as  
 birds of night.

PRAXITHEA

Man, what thy mother bare thee born to say  
 Speak ; for no word yet wavering on thy lip  
 Can wound me worse than thought forestalls or fear.

ATHENIAN HERALD

I have no will to weave too fine or far,  
 O queen, the web of sweet with bitter speech,  
 Bright words with darkling ; but the brief truth  
 shown  
 Shall plead my pardon for a lingering tongue,  
 Loth yet to strike hope through the heart and slay.  
 The sun's light still was lordly housed in heaven  
 When the twain fronts of war encountering smote  
 First fire out of the battle ; but not long  
 Had the fresh wave of windy fight begun  
 Heaving, and all the surge of swords to sway,  
 When timeless night laid hold of heaven, and took  
 With its great gorge the noon as in a gulf,  
 Strangled ; and thicker than the shrill-winged shafts  
 Flew the fleet lightnings, held in chase through heaven  
 By headlong heat of thunders on their trail  
 Loosed as on quest of quarry ; that our host  
 Smit with sick presage of some wrathful God



Quailed, but the foe as from one iron throat  
With one great sheer sole thousand-throated cry  
Shook earth, heart-staggered from their shout, and  
    clove

The eyeless hollow of heaven ; and breached there-  
    with

As with an onset of strength-shattering sound  
The rent vault of the roaring noon of night  
From her throned seat of usurpation rang  
Reverberate answer ; such response there pealed  
As though the tide's charge of a storming sea  
Had burst the sky's wall, and made broad a breach  
In the ambient girth and bastion flanked with stars  
Guarding the fortress of the Gods, and all  
Crashed now together on ruin ; and through that cry  
And higher above it ceasing one man's note  
Tore its way like a trumpet : *Charge, make end,*  
*Charge, halt not, strike, rend up their strength by the*  
    *roots,*

*Strike, break them, make your birthright's promise*  
    *sure,*

*Show your hearts hardier than the fenced land breeds*  
*And souls breathed in you from no spirit of earth,*  
*Sons of the sea's waves ;* and all ears that heard  
Rang with that fiery cry, that the fine air  
Thereat was fired, and kindling filled the plain  
Full of that fierce and trumpet-quenching breath  
That spake the clarions silent ; no glad song  
For folk to hear that wist how dire a God  
Begot this peril to them, what strong race  
Fathered the sea-born tongue that sang them death,  
Threatening ; so raged through the red foam of fight  
Poseidon's son Eumolpus ; and the war  
Quailed round him coming, and our side bore back,

As a stream thwarted by the wind and sea  
That meet it midway mouth to mouth, and beat  
The flood back of its issue ; but the king  
Shouted against them, crying, *O Father-God,  
Source of the God my father, from thine hand  
Send me what end seems good now in thy sight,  
But death from mine to this man ;* and the word  
Quick on his lips yet like a blast of fire  
Blew them together ; and round its lords that met  
Paused all the reeling battle ; two main waves  
Meeting, one hurled sheer from the sea-wall back  
That shocks it sideways, one right in from sea  
Charging, that full in face takes at one blow  
That whole recoil and ruin, with less fear  
Startle men's eyes late shipwrecked ; for a breath,  
Crest fronting crest hung, wave to wave rose poised,  
Then clashed, breaker to breaker ; cloud with cloud  
In heaven, chariot with chariot closed on earth,  
One fourfold flash and thunder ; yet a breath,  
And with the king's spear through his red heart's  
root

Driven, like a rock split from its hill-side, fell  
Hurled under his own horsehoofs dead on earth  
The sea-beast that made war on earth from sea,  
Dumb, with no shrill note left of storming song,  
Eumolpus ; and his whole host with one stroke  
Spear-stricken through its dense deep iron heart  
Fell hurtling from us, and in fierce recoil  
Drew seaward as with one wide wail of waves,  
Resorbed with reluctance ; such a groan  
Rose from the fluctuant reflue of its ranks,  
Sucked sullen back and strengthless ; but scarce yet  
The steeds had sprung and wheels had bruised their  
lord

Fallen, when from highest height of the sundering  
heaven

The Father for his brother's son's sake slain  
Sent a sheer shaft of lightning writhen and smote  
Right on his son's son's forehead, that unhelmed  
Shone like the star that shines down storm, and gave  
Light to men's eyes that saw thy lord their king  
Stand and take breath from battle ; then too soon  
Saw sink down as a sunset in sea-mist  
The high bright head that here in van of the earth  
Rose like a headland, and through storm and night  
Took all the sea's wrath on it ; and now dead  
They bring thee back by war-forsaken ways  
The strength called once thy husband, the great  
guard

That was of all men, stay of all men's lives,  
They bear him slain of no man but a God,  
Godlike ; and toward him dead the city's gates  
Fling their arms open mother-like, through him  
Saved ; and the whole clear land is purged of war  
What wilt thou say now of this weal and woe ?

## PRAXITHEA

I praise the Gods for Athens. O sweet Earth,  
Mother, what joy thy soul has of thy son,  
Thy life of my dead lord, mine own soul knows  
That knows thee godlike ; and what grief should mine,  
What sorrow should my heart have, who behold  
Thee made so heavenlike happy ? This alone  
I only of all these blessed, all thy kind,  
Crave this for blessing to me, that in theirs  
Have but a part thus bitter ; give me too  
Death, and the sight of eyes that meet not mine.  
And thee too from no godless heart or tongue

Reproachful, thee too by thy living name,  
Father divine, merciful God, I call,  
Spring of my life-springs, fountain of my stream,  
Pure and poured forth to one great end with thine,  
Sweet head sublime of triumph and these tears,  
Cephisus, if thou seest as gladly shed  
Thy blood in mine as thine own waves are given  
To do this great land good, to give for love  
The same lips drink and comfort the same hearts,  
Do thou then, O my father, white-souled God,  
To thy most pure earth-hallowing heart eterne  
Take what thou gavest to be given for these,  
'Take thy child to thee ; for her time is full,  
For all she hath borne she hath given, seen all she  
had

Flow from her, from her eyes and breasts and hands  
Flow forth to feed this people ; but be thou,  
Dear God and gracious to all souls alive,  
Good to thine own seed also ; let me sleep,  
Father ; my sleepless darkling day is done,  
My day of life like night, but slumberless :  
For all my fresh fair springs, and his that ran  
In one stream's bed with mine, are all run out  
Into the deep of death. The Gods have saved  
Athens ; my blood has bought her at their hand,  
And ye sit safe ; be glorious and be glad  
As now for all time always, countrymen,  
And love my dead for ever ; but me, me,  
What shall man give for these so good as death ?

## CHORUS

From the cup of my heart I pour through my lips  
along [Str. I.  
The mingled wine of a joyful and sorrowful song ;

Wine sweeter than honey and bitterer than blood that  
is poured

From the chalice of gold, from the point of the two-  
edged sword.

For the city redeemed should joy flow forth as a flood,  
And a dirge make moan for the city polluted with  
blood.

Great praise should the Gods have surely, my  
country, of thee, [Ant. 1.]

Were thy brow but as white as of old for thy sons to  
see,

Were thy hands as bloodless, as blameless thy cheek  
divine ;

But a stain on it stands of the life-blood offered for  
thine.

What thanks shall we give that are mixed not and  
marred with dread

For the price that has ransomed thine own with thine  
own child's head ?

For a taint there cleaves to the people redeemed  
with blood, [Str. 2.]

And a plague to the blood-red hand.

The rain shall not cleanse it, the dew nor the  
sacred flood

That blesses the glad live land.

In the darkness of earth beneath, in the world with-  
out sun, [Ant. 2.]

The shadows of past things reign ;

And a cry goes up from the ghost of an ill deed done,  
And a curse for a virgin slain.

#### ATHENA

Hear, men that mourn, and woman without mate,  
Hearken ; ye sick of soul with fear, and thou

Dumb-stricken for thy children ; hear ye too,  
Earth, and the glory of heaven, and winds of the air,  
And the most holy heart of the deep sea,  
Late wrath, now full of quiet ; hear thou, sun,  
Rolled round with the upper fire of rolling heaven  
And all the stars returning ; hills and streams,  
Springs and fresh fountains, day that seest these deeds,  
Night that shalt hide not ; and thou child of mine,  
Child of a maiden, by a maid redeemed,  
Blood-guiltless, though bought back with innocent  
blood,

City mine own ; I Pallas bring thee word,  
I virgin daughter of the most high God  
Give all you charge and lay command on all  
The word I bring be wasted not ; for this  
The Gods have stablished and his soul hath sworn,  
That time nor earth nor changing sons of man  
Nor waves of generations, nor the winds  
Of ages risen and fallen that steer their tides  
Through light and dark of birth and lovelier death  
From storm toward haven inviolable, shall see  
So great a light alive beneath the sun  
As the awless eye of Athens ; all fame else  
Shall be to her fame as a shadow in sleep  
To this wide noon at waking ; men most praised  
In lands most happy for their children found  
Shall hold as highest of honours given of God  
To be but likened to the least of thine,  
Thy least of all, my city ; thine shall be  
The crown of all songs sung, of all deeds done  
Thine the full flower for all time ; in thine hand  
Shall time be like a sceptre, and thine head  
Wear worship for a garland ; nor one leaf  
Shall change or winter cast out of thy crown



Till all flowers wither in the world ; thine eyes  
Shall first in man's flash lightning liberty,  
Thy tongue shall first say freedom ; thy first hand  
Shall loose the thunder terror as a hound  
To hunt from sunset to the springs of the sun  
Kings that rose up out of the populous east  
To make their quarry of thee, and shall strew  
With multitudinous limbs of myriad herds  
The foodless pastures of the sea, and make  
With wrecks immeasurable and unsummed defeat  
One ruin of all their many-folded flocks  
Ill shepherded from Asia ; by thy side  
Shall fight thy son the north wind, and the sea  
That was thine enemy shall be sworn thy friend  
And hand be struck in hand of his and thine  
To hold faith fast for aye ; with thee, though each  
Make war on other, wind and sea shall keep  
Peace, and take truce as brethren for thy sake  
Leagued with one spirit and single-hearted strength  
To break thy foes in pieces, who shall meet  
The wind's whole soul and might of the main sea  
Full in their face of battle, and become  
A laughter to thee ; like a shower of leaves  
Shall their long galleys rank by staggering rank  
Be dashed adrift on ruin, and in thy sight  
The sea deride them, and that lord of the air  
Who took by violent hand thy child to wife  
With his loud lips bemock them, by his breath  
Swept out of sight of being ; so great a grace  
Shall this day give thee, that makes one in heart  
With mine the deep sea's godhead, and his son  
With him that was thine helmsman, king with king,  
Dead man with dead ; such only names as these  
Shalt thou call royal, take none else or less



To hold of men in honour ; but with me  
Shall these be worshipped as one God, and mix  
With mine the might of their mysterious names  
In one same shrine served singly, thence to keep  
Perpetual guard on Athens ; time and change,  
Masters and lords of all men, shall be made  
To thee that knowest no master and no lord  
Servants ; the days that lighten heaven and nights  
That darken shall be ministers of thine  
To attend upon thy glory, the great years  
As light-engraven letters of thy name  
Writ by the sun's hand on the front of the earth  
For world-beholden witness ; such a gift  
For one fair chaplet of three lives enwreathed  
To hang for ever from thy storied shrine,  
And this thy steersman fallen with tiller in hand  
To stand for ever at thy ship's helm seen,  
Shall he that bade their threefold flower be shorn  
And laid him low that planted, give thee back  
In sign of sweet land reconciled with sea  
And heavenlike earth with heaven ; such promise-  
pledge  
I daughter without mother born of God  
To the most woful mother born of man  
Plight for continual comfort. Hail, and live  
Beyond all human hap of mortal doom  
Happy ; for so my sire hath sworn and I.

## PRAXITHEA

O queen Athena, from a heart made whole  
Take as thou givest us blessing ; never tear  
Shall stain for shame nor groan untune the song  
That as a bird shall spread and fold its wings  
Here in thy praise for ever, and fulfil

The whole world's crowning city crowned with thee  
As the sun's eye fulfils and crowns with sight  
The circling crown of heaven. There is no grief  
Great as the joy to be made one in will  
With him that is the heart and rule of life  
And thee, God born of God ; thy name is ours,  
And thy large grace more great than our desire.

## CHORUS

From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain  
is poured of thanksgiving,  
My country, my mother, for thee,  
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy  
sight and a name everliving  
At heart of thy people to be  
In the darkness of change on the waters of time they  
shall turn from afar  
To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of  
these pyres for a star.  
They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who  
hate thee shall see and take warning,  
Our mother that makest us free ;  
And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the  
Waves that made war on their morning,  
And friendship and fame of the sea.



## NOTES

- v. 497-503. Cf. Eurip. Fr. *Erechtheus*, 46-49.  
v. 522-530. Id. 32-40.  
v. 778. Æsch. *Supp.* 524-6.  
v. 983. Soph. Fr. (*Oreithyia*) 555.  
    ὑπέρ τε πόντον πάντ' ἐπ' ἔσχατα χθονὸς  
    νυκτός τε πηγὰς οὐρανοῦ τ' ἀναπτυχὰς,  
    Φοίβου παλαιὸν κῆπον.  
v. 1163. Æsch. Fr. (*Danaïdes*) 38.  
    Ἕμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν  
    ἔκυσε γαῖαν.  
v. 1168. Id.  
    δενδρῶτις ὥρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου  
    τέλειός ἐστι.  
v. 1749. 'God born of God.' Soph. *Ant.* 834. θεός τοι καὶ θεογεννης.



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